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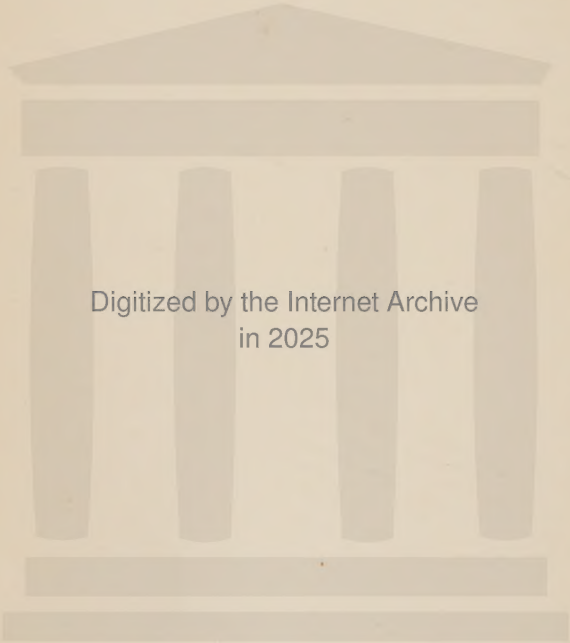

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My Struggle for Light

My Struggle for Light

Confessions of a Preacher

BY

R. WIMMER

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My Struggle for Light

I

MORALITY AND RELIGION

1.

I HAD been taught that men without religion are ever evil, for piety alone makes a man good. But I learned another lesson from experience. I learned to know men who lived a blameless life, who faithfully did their duty and sacrificed themselves for the good of others, and yet openly confessed that they could not believe in the existence of a God. And I learned to know others who not only spoke pious words but who gave the decided impression that they were moved by feelings of piety, and yet their faults were very great and their actions were most strangely inconsistent with their

own words. Then was I perplexed and filled with many thoughts.

I asked myself: Why is it that these unbelievers do that which is good? Is it because, if one judges rightly, good conduct is of all conduct the most profitable? For he that walks uprightly is most successful; he is spared the miserable consequences of vice; he gains for himself an honourable name; he forges his own good hap.

But I found that this answer did not suffice. I perceived loftier motives. I witnessed examples of a self-denial that excluded all idea of material advantage. The conviction was forced upon me that a real love of goodness inspired such noble deeds. I found here a strong impulse to satisfy conscience, a lively sense of duty, pure unselfish loving kindness. Was I to shut my eyes to these facts because they were inconsistent with a preconceived opinion? I did not do so, but enquired into them that I might not err concerning the truth.

As I compared these men, irreligious and yet morally good, with many of the truly pious of my acquaintance, I was compelled to admit that in regard to moral worth the latter had no advantage over the former. Indeed, as I weighed the motives of each, it appeared to me that simple single-hearted devotion to conscience stood higher than the glorying in God's peculiar favour and the hope of a heavenly reward which the pious man brings into close connection with his performance of duty. At all events my investigations led me to the firm conclusion that true morality can exist even apart from religion.

2.

Now I became doubtful whether religion is necessary to man, and so whether it is even true. Then I enquired of my own soul, and said: Canst thou live without it?

I examined myself, and asked whether that which I regarded as the religious principle in

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myself was not something simply acquired or inherited, a sweet memory of childhood, a beautiful melody of home whose charm held me spellbound. But I found that my faith, far more than in days gone by, answered to a present need of my soul, and that the loss of it would cut through the very roots of my spiritual life.

I have the witness of my own conscience that my love of what is good and my aspirations after moral perfection are free from every external consideration, that I hate all boasting, and that I am influenced by no thought of reward. But my consciousness suffers me not to remain hanging in the air. I must cling to the stock whence I have sprung—my spirit must cling to the eternal spirit.

I would understand my own nature. I cannot suppress the presentiment of eternal truth within me, I cannot live in a dream. I must know why it is that I love the good and strive after moral perfection, that I may do it in full consciousness and remain no longer a riddle to

myself. And as I enquire I find a solution only in the belief in the source and principle of all life—in the Living God.

The universe in which I live overpowers my senses and fills me with awe of the Infinite. Am I to suffer myself to be overwhelmed by it and to shrink into my nothingness? Or shall I wantonly set myself upon a lonely height and say: I stand above all things, for I have reason and freedom? Neither is possible. I must worship. I must in utter lowliness humble myself before the Infinite, and yet at the same time feel myself allied thereto as Life springing from the Eternal Life.

And I must love. Not simply attaching myself in loving dependence to an individual soul, but fully and entirely surrendering my whole heart, with all that I am I must cleave to that Being who is my all in all.

And I must give thanks. I must feel that my whole being is a gift. Above all things I must tranquilly rejoice in my inward life as I direct it thither whence it has sprung.

And I must trust. I must know that I am loved, I must know that my most sacred yearning and desire is not self-deception, not a stretching forth of the hand on my part only, but that the hand I seek is outstretched to meet mine, that the spirit to which I open my soul stoops to me, enters into communion with me.

I have no power to absolve myself from my sins; for I have sinned not against myself alone, but against an eternal law above me. There where this law has its origin must I seek peace, calm for my restless heart, and healing for my wounds.

In short I must live, and without Religion I cannot live.

3.

I surveyed the history of men, and I found that all nations have felt the necessity of bringing their finite being into fellowship with the Infinite, and I found that this necessity is the basis of all phenomena of religion.

It is true that these phenomena differ exceedingly, and many would find in this difference the proof that they rest upon illusion. The savages whose thoughts never rise above the visible world, whose wishes never outstrip the satisfaction of the senses, see in their gods beings like unto themselves, only more powerful, and seek from them just that which they themselves think desirable. When nations have reached a higher plane of culture and social development, and have learned to know the blessings and the objects of civilisation, they then think of the heavenly powers as the creators and guardians of social ordinances and of culture, and they expect from them the establishment and furtherance not only of their comfort, but also of their moral and intellectual welfare. But when the Spirit had developed to full independent activity, and the individual had recognised in this his own real and true being, then he lifted his eyes in ardent aspiration to the God who is Spirit and yearned to enter into communion

with Him in the depths of his consciousness, that he might attain to inward perfection and a life full and complete.

Thus the content of the religious life depends upon the spiritual standpoint of a people or of a period. But the need is everywhere the same; the craving of the finite soul for union with the Infinite that it may be established and invigorated. All religious phenomena point to this fundamental craving of the soul, which is thus proved by history to be an essential trait of human nature.

4.

Among individuals of my acquaintance I found distinctions in the religious life similar to those which history had revealed in the case of whole epochs.

Among those who are accounted, and indeed regard themselves as brethren in faith, who use the same religious formulæ and worship God with the same forms, I have

noticed marked differences of spirit. Some seek God for Himself because they desire to be one with Him, that they may become good and may attain to perfection and the blessedness of inward peace. Others thrust themselves upon Him, that by His power they may be defended from outward harm and may obtain for themselves material blessings.

He is therefore for some the very fountain and source of spiritual life, for others He is only the almighty ruler of the material universe. The former approach Him in sincerity, they strive after perfect righteousness and purity of heart and life, and for this very reason are ever conscious of their imperfection, and glory in no merit of their own. They find in love itself the reward of love. They crave only for grace and loving favour, and accept the sorrows of life as means of purification. The others serve God because they fear earthly punishment, or in expectation of material reward bring to Him offerings which are not of the heart, that they may

receive external recompense. They rely upon their piety, which is yet compatible with the most serious moral faults; are perplexed if trouble approaches, and find their highest comfort in the hope of future reward.

Attitudes thus contrasted I have found in the most manifold forms and gradations, varying from piety of the purest moral character to the grossest selfishness in the mask of religion, often shading into one another so imperceptibly that it was difficult to draw the lines of demarcation. And yet, whether it be easy or difficult to distinguish them one from another, and though their modes of expression may be different, contrasts of this kind mark the true content of the religious life as well as the essential distinctions in it. All others mark only distinctions of form or conception.

Then I sought for the underlying cause of these contrasts, and I found it in a fundamental difference of moral character. Man seeks in God that which is for him the highest

and most desirable. The good man—he who has discovered the value of goodness and strives after it with his whole heart—if he be of religious mind, looks up to heaven that he may attain to inward perfection through communion with the Father of all good. The worldly man—he who only wishes for and aims at earthly comfort—if he is disposed to religion, will lift his eyes upward that he may obtain from the Ruler of the Universe the satisfaction of his earthly desires.

5.

I saw immoral men, who nevertheless showed in their behaviour evidence of a very decided religious life. I thought: this is hypocrisy; they are simply imitating others, or they are playing to win some advantage, to gain the praise of men. But on looking more closely, I found it was not so. I could not conceal from myself that sometimes behind this behaviour was to be discovered a real religious

need, a passionate feeling, and a burning longing to plunge into the depths of the Infinite. In prayer and meditation they experienced a real inward satisfaction, they yearned to throw themselves with their sin-stained souls into the sea of the Divine mercy. And yet they were entirely lacking in moral strength and earnestness. They did not hate sin, and therefore made no struggle to overcome it. They were untruthful and of low mind. It was possible for them to pray fervently, then to commit some crime and again to become absorbed in religious rhapsody.

I asked myself, what can this mean? These men seek no worldly blessing from God but only Himself, and yet they are not good men. Then I looked closely and found that their religious fervour was in reality only a form of sensuous enjoyment. Their passionate emotion is no better than some evil passion, and can produce the same activity which is yet not a power for good but for evil. In substance, therefore, their religion is the same as the

religion of those who serve God only that they may receive material benefits; it has no fellowship with that piety which is morally pure.

Thus I realised that just as a man can be good without religion, so also a man may be religious without moral goodness.

6.

After this I was strongly tempted to believe that religion was of doubtful worth. But I thought of you—ye pure pious souls whom I have learned to know in the journey of life, ye whom I have to thank for all that is best in me.

How often have I perceived the consecration that rests upon you. How often have I felt myself raised above myself when under your influence. Life is so serious to you; and even the most trivial circumstance is important in your eyes if only it contributes to your inward perfection; for with you everything has an eternal significance; ye think and ye act as in

the presence of the most Holy. And yet ye are always so cheerful and happy, so gentle and tender, that when near you the restless heart is calmed as by the breath of peace; for ye feel yourselves in harmony with Him that is both One and True, your sins forgiven, His spirit in your souls.

In poverty ye are rich, in wealth ye are humble, in bondage free, in freedom obedient. Ye have overcome the world, yet ye serve in self-sacrificing love. For since God is yours, ye know that ye have all; and since ye call Him Father, ye are in bondage to no man. Ye walk so surely, ye see so clearly, ye accommodate yourselves so easily to all conditions, ye are in joy so thankful, ye bear the burdens of life so patiently. For with you all that is earthly is glorified by the light of Heaven, and the temporal is bound up with the eternal.

This is fulness of life. He that has once seen this vision and has breathed this heavenly air can find nowhere else satisfaction for his

soul. Is there one that understands not this blessedness? Let him not say that he knows human nature. Its bud he may have seen, but he has not yet seen its blossom.

As in the bud there sleeps a wondrous secret, so it is with the good man who is without religion. In his works of moral goodness he has formed within himself the life of the spirit, but this life is not yet spread open to the sun, though it has developed in his light. This good man is possessed by a presentiment of the eternal goodness which is all in all. Thitherward his whole inner self is straining, but has not yet burst through to the vision of the Sun of the Soul, and therefore he does not yet even know himself. The good bud is indeed something much better than a worthless flower. So too the spiritual life which is highly developed, though without religion, stands far above the religious sentiment of an earthly mind. But it is not yet perfect in itself, only in religion can it attain to complete development.

7.

If moral goodness is the bud and pure moral piety is the flower, then morality must in point of time precede religion. But does not a glance into actual life teach us the opposite? Besides, we ourselves from our childhood have learned to regard the moral ideal as a divine command, religion has been for us the teacher of ethics. And we demand of religion that it should make men good, and we regard a righteous life as the fruit of real and sincere faith.

As I tried to understand the matter more clearly, I remembered that in this case the religion under consideration had been handed down to us from former ages. The question therefore is really not what came first in our experience, but what was the ruling and governing principle in the origin of religions. And historical investigation surely teaches us that every advance or retreat in moral development has brought about a corresponding change in the religious life.

It is true that progress in the sphere of religion has been brought about by the revolutionary influences of prophets. But who and what were these? They were men in whose souls the aspirations, the upward strivings of their time, were focussed so as to enkindle the light of a new religious truth which men required in order that they might see the goal of their aspirations and might receive an answer to the obstinate questionings of their souls. The very personality of a prophet is determined and explained by such a conflict of new moral forces in mankind.

Besides this, there is indeed in him a mysterious something which has enabled him to bring the moral development to a conclusion in a new religious life. But whatever the explanation of this mystery may be, the fact remains that it is always moral progress, a higher conception of the end of morality, that gives the new content to the idea of God and to the life of piety.

Only in consequence of the formation of a

moral sense could mankind advance from the worship of gods that were personifications of the forces of nature to the adoration of divinities with moral attributes. For how could men have thought of the gods as creators and guardians of moral order if the idea of morality had not yet arisen within themselves?

And how can we imagine the possibility of advance from the idea of divinities which represent only isolated aspects of the good to the conception of the one perfect holy God? Only if we allow that a developed appreciation of the good as a connected whole had driven men to enquire more deeply into its source.

Religion therefore does not create its moral content, but only brings it into its right relation with the Infinite, and proclaims it to future generations by word and by example as the will of the Most High.

8.

From childhood we have learned to know the moral ideal as the will of God. We have gained much thereby, for the ideal stands before our eyes in its true significance and glory. The majority of men, the people as they are called, cannot perceive it at all except in this light, and the loss of religion would mean with them the loss of morality.

To the man who is morally developed the moral ideal even in its own light seems beautiful and lovely, but I count myself happy in that I have learned to see it in the light which shines from the Eternal. For I can testify from my own experience that, thus illumined, this ideal gains quite new attractions and wins far more of living force, so that it exerts a more powerful influence upon feeling and will, provided always that the same moral earnestness and the same moral endeavour are present.

Thus sincere piety exerts a constant influence in promoting morality.

But there is also a reciprocal influence. Each stage of growth in the moral life of the pious soul causes a corresponding advance in the religious life. For true spiritual religion cannot be taught by instruction from without any more than moral goodness. I can assert indeed that God is good and perfect. But what I mean by this assertion depends upon the experience I have had of goodness in my own life.

But it may be objected that if this is so, then it is impossible for a sinner to turn to God. Nor indeed can he, so long as he is satisfied with the life of sin, and has therefore turned his back upon morality. But the sinner who cries out for deliverance already has within himself the principle of a moral life higher than that of the so-called righteous man, who is content with a mere appearance of goodness. For why does he feel himself wretched if not because the life of his soul has developed to such a degree that he turns with longing to that which is really good? Thus,

indeed, there is in him more moral goodness than in the other, and he has a loftier sense of the meaning of the perfection of God. We ought not to be deceived by appearances. The moral worth of a man cannot be judged by that which lies before our eyes.

The more richly the moral life unfolds itself, the deeper becomes the spiritual life. The more deeply the religious life strikes its roots, the greater power it conveys to the moral life. What a wonderful reciprocity in promoting the right development of human nature!

II

GOD AND NATURE

1.

Objections of many kinds are raised against the belief in God. But I found that most of these proved worthless on closer scrutiny. There was one, however, to which I was compelled to return again and again. It was shown to me that this faith led to contradictions of thought.

"We speak of immutable laws of nature, we seek both in science and ordinary life to explain everything by their means; nor are we satisfied until we have discovered the natural causes of each event. How is this consistent with the idea of a God who governs and works in the whole universe according to His own free will?"

"We call each event good or evil according as it promotes or hinders our welfare. We endeavour to bring the good within our reach, and to repel from ourselves that which is evil; and with this end in view we interpose in the ordinary course of nature. How does this harmonise with the thought that all things come from God?"

"We regard it as merit in a man of noble character that he is pitiful and that he heals, as far as in him lies, the wounds which men have received in the hard struggle with destiny. How does this agree with belief in a pitiful father who is the ruler of destiny?"

Such objections were brought before me in order to convince me that my mind was held captive by a delusion. I faced these difficulties, and the more I meditated upon them the more I was involved in a tumult of warring thoughts, and it was only after a long time that I found a way of escape. For I was compelled to admit that these contradictions between my religious conceptions and my ordinary way of

thinking really existed, and had often, indeed, been felt by me.

2.

A thunderstorm approaches. We know how it has arisen; we are not astounded by the lightning and thunder, the raging wind and the rain, for we know the causes and the laws of these. And even if in a particular case we cannot foretell what course the storm will take, we are nevertheless convinced that this is exactly prescribed by the co-operation in accordance with law of all the existing conditions. The result, indeed, is as precisely determined as it is that the addition of a column of figures only gives one total, however often we add it up. And yet in an ecstasy of reverent fear we say: How mighty is the Lord in the storm. He brings hither the clouds, He hurls forth the lightning, He speaks in the thunder, and when the parched land thirsts for refreshment, we thank Him for His gift of rain.

What then? Must the storm go its own way in accordance with immutable laws? or does God direct it according to His own pleasure? and could He direct it otherwise than He does? Under the conditions existing at the time, is it absolutely necessary that it should rain? or can God even withhold the rain?

Suppose the storm assumes for us a threatening aspect. We tremble for the plentiful harvest ripening in the fields, and we pray: Lord be merciful and spare us. But the destroying hail rushes down, and soon our bright hopes are annihilated and grim desolation stares us in the face. But now we pray no more for mercy, we say not: Lord, Thou canst do what Thou willest; raise up again the shattered blades and restore again that which has been destroyed.

But why not? If God is Almighty, why is it that we imagine that He can direct the hail-storm away from us, but that when it has fallen upon us He cannot reverse its effects? Is there not a contradiction of thought here?

Some dear one is struggling with death upon his sick bed. On their knees his friends cry to the Almighty, "Thou canst do all things," they pray, "nothing is impossible with Thee; check the progress of the disease, grant us this precious life." He has passed away, and now in their grief they try to resign themselves to the inevitable. But none, not even he whose faith is strongest, thinks of asking God to raise the dead friend to life again.

Is then His Almighty power limited? He with whom all things are possible, has He power only to make the dying man whole? Can He not also restore him to life again when he is dead? It surely implies a contradiction of thought that no one even expects this.

3.

These investigations led me to the following conclusion. If we would not renounce our faith in God, we must think of His almighty power otherwise than men usually think of it.

We ought not to contrast the natural order of things with the Divine activity. Each must be the same in principle. There must be no difference of meaning between saying, "God brings the storm upon us," and saying, "It comes upon us in accordance with Nature's law." Hence it must be that God works in the law, that the law is His will, and that what happens in accordance with law is His action.

Closer consideration of this conclusion showed me that it was not only logical, but also consistent with piety. For if the natural order is distinct from the Divine activity, it runs a separate course and is something by itself. But God is then no longer All in all. If, on the other hand, we suppose that there is in God a twofold activity, a natural and a supernatural, then there arises a discord in our conception of the Highest, a discord which on countless occasions disturbs our religious life. We waver hither and thither between God and Nature; we seek the help of God only as a stopgap on occasions when we think

that nature cannot serve our purpose, and the result is that we neither feel ourselves at home in nature nor are we fully at peace with the all-ruling providence of God.

It is impossible that the course of the storm should be different from that which it takes. This is the demand not only of science but also of Faith. For if God could make it different, why does He not do so? I once thought that this question was sufficiently answered when I said: He wills that it be not different. But can we imagine that anything which He does not will is even possible for Him, that He can act even against His own will? We cannot in reverence think thus of God.

And so in reference to God we may not even speak of possibility which is not at the same time actuality. God does what He does, and it is really impossible for Him to do it in any other way, impossible from the beginning to the end. The ascription to God of such possibility is only a play of imagination on our

part, whereby we perhaps think to honour Him though we most certainly do not.

4.

I asked: Why do we speak of events in such different ways? At one time we simply say, "It rains"; at another time, "God gives us rain." Sometimes we declare, "The medicine has cured the patient"; at other times, "God has made him whole." Now one hears people say, "The man is dead"; again, "God has called him to Himself." Are not these different modes of expression confusing to the mind?

A simple observation showed me the necessity of this difference. I saw that so far as the external life is concerned, we take into consideration nothing except the fact itself, its causes and its effects. It rains: this is a phenomenon which has its cause in other phenomena and its natural results which follow inevitably. It is possible for these results to promote or hinder our welfare, our health, our

bodily comfort; and we accordingly speak of the rainfall as good or evil, we rejoice or are troubled.

This is the natural way of regarding things. And we cannot but look at them and treat them thus, for we are ourselves creatures of nature, we belong to nature, and are bound up with her ordered life. It would be unnatural, and therefore unreal, to wish to drag in the name of God in cases where we deal only with the mere occurrence of an event, whether in the realm of science or of ordinary life.

It is quite another matter when we wish to express the feeling of the devout mind in the presence of some natural occurrence. If it excites our joy in such a way that we lift up our hearts in thankfulness, then we say, "God blesses us in that which has happened." If it afflicts us, so that we feel compelled to find peace for our souls in the thought of the Most High, then we declare, "God tries us in this trouble that He has sent upon us."

This is the religious way of regarding things.

And we cannot but look at them in this way, because we are not merely creatures of nature, but live a spiritual life which connects us with the primal source of all that is.

These two methods are complementary the one to the other as outward and inward. Neither of them should be accounted superfluous or unjustifiable, but each should be kept distinct from the other.

I speak as I feel. I express myself in religious fashion when some event stirs up in my soul a spontaneous feeling of piety and brings to my remembrance my relation to the Most High. If it does not move me in this way, I regard it simply as an event. If, for example, I have made somewhere a small purchase and regard it as a good bargain, I do not say, "It is of God that I have found this shop." And if I feel uncomfortably warm on a hot day, I do not say to myself, "God sends this heat to try me." I should feel that it was irreverent to speak in this way, for the things in question are too trivial. And yet do

not small things come from God as really as great things? What, indeed, is small and what is great in His eyes?

5.

A house is on fire. The fire-brigade strains every nerve to check the course of the hostile element and to protect the neighbouring buildings. It is a joy to see how each man does his allotted duty and all proceeds in perfect order in accordance with a premeditated plan. And when the end is attained, we praise the brave men and their splendid discipline, and we say, "They have prevented worse misfortune."

A blind man has submitted to an operation, and has regained his sight. He returns home with joy. He looks with rapture upon the beauteous world, he beholds with delight the countenances of his friends, he rejoices as one called back to new life. Then he glories in the wonderful development of the healing art,

he praises the skill of the man who has opened the eyes of the blind.

All this seems natural to us. And yet I must ask the question: How does it accord with the belief that everything is wrought by God?

We say with full assurance: "If the hand of man had not interposed, the fire would have raged until it had devoured all upon which it could feed; and if the surgeon had not operated, the patient would have remained blind till the day of his death." And what we say agrees with the report of our moral consciousness. We are convinced that we can effect something. We feel that we have the power of determining our actions, and of thus interposing in the course of nature. We call this power our freedom of will. And our own conscience tells us that it is our duty to set this power in action, and that if we neglect to do this we are in the wrong.

Our whole conception of morality depends upon this conviction. How, then, can we still

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say that God does all things and that all things come from Him?

I received the answer: "We must do what is in our power, but it lies in God's hands to prosper our work." At first sight this seemed right well said; but the more I reflected the less real meaning could I discover in it.

If in nature every cause has an effect which is completely determined, then every human action has its corresponding result; for it takes its place in nature as a force among other forces. If a certain mass of water extinguishes a fire of a certain magnitude, it is immaterial whether this water falls from the clouds as rain or is poured over the flames by the hand of man. We are thus brought back again to the old question: If the causes are quite the same, and if the conditions are similar in every respect, can God make the effect either this or that? Does the matter rest in His good pleasure?

And so I found myself back again in the old train of thought. I was compelled to

answer: If the law of nature is something apart from the Divine will, mere mindless force, then a separate operation of God distinct from nature is not only intelligible but even necessary. If, however, natural law is itself the will of God, then it is impossible to see how God beside this will of His can have another. But I cannot separate the law of nature from God, for by so doing I should limit His essence. Hence there remains but one conclusion:—that in the realm of nature there is no other will of God than that which is revealed in natural law, and only that can happen which happens in accordance with law.

6.

After I had more closely investigated our modes of thought, I found that we all of us really accept this view of the matter.

If two armies of unequal strength take the field against one another, we do not, of course, judge of the probability of victory merely from

consideration of the respective numbers of the combatants. It is even possible that the smaller army may win if it is the more valiant, or better led or better armed. These, however, are all natural conditions. But suppose that all the natural conditions are completely similar, upon what would the decisive result depend?

Some one answers: "God gives the victory to whom He will." Nor will he find any difficulty in his answer if one army is about fifty thousand and the other sixty thousand strong. But would he repeat it if only fifty men stood opposed to sixty thousand? Most certainly not; he would say: "There is no hope for such a handful; it is impossible for it to gain the victory."

Accordingly his faith that God gives the victory as He pleases fails after a certain point.

What should we say of the government of a small country, which, in the confidence that God will defend the right, has declared war against a strong state? It has indeed happened in the

history of mankind that a small nation has victoriously withstood the assault of a great nation or has even shattered in pieces some mighty kingdom. But a sufficient explanation of such events is always found in the inward corruption of the more powerful state, or in some inferiority it showed in the conduct of the war; or in other natural causes. But suppose that no such assistance could be counted upon, and that a just cause were the only ally; how could anyone praise a government, if, calling upon God's assistance, it should undertake an absolutely unequal conflict?

Some would say: "Such a course is foolish and unprincipled"; others would express the same judgment in the words: "This is tempting God." But does not this judgment involve the admission that when it comes to decision by force of arms, might stands before right; and that even God Himself will not reverse this law?

Thus we all recognise, at least up to a certain point, that the results of human actions

follow according to immutable laws. And if we are unwilling to deny the all-ruling God or to restrict His operation to particular spheres, we find ourselves forced to the conclusion that these laws are nothing else than His own will.

7.

Yet although these facts are obvious, I was obliged to admit that it is difficult for us to acquiesce in them. The religious mind has a certain shrinking from accepting them, for it fears that God may by this means be alienated from it.

We, as men, have the power to determine whether we wish to act in this way or that. We regard this freedom of ours as the peculiar dignity of that spiritual faculty which raises us above nature. And so we fear that we place God beneath ourselves if we deny Him similar freedom, and regard His rule as governed by necessity.

This is however an error. Let us imagine

to ourselves a man who is perfectly good; would he have the power to will that which is evil? It is impossible, we say, for then he would not be perfectly good. And so we find, even in the case of man, that, as he approaches perfection, his will becomes more and more constant and determined in its action; and that if we give the name of freedom to the possibility of choosing between good and evil, then this freedom is a sign of moral imperfection. We are, however, wrong in calling it freedom; we ought rather to say: He alone is free who wills nothing but the good and is hindered by nothing from so willing. And so when we regard the Divine Will as complete necessity, we ascribe to It unhindered freedom, for the necessity lies within the Will Itself, is not imposed from without.

But that anxious fear has a yet deeper root. We regard it as our moral duty to take external nature into our service and to employ it in realising that which we call good. We therefore cannot but regard the disposition and

operation of the forces of nature as crude, mindless and ofttimes hostile to ourselves, and we cannot but set ourselves in opposition to nature as the champions of a moral world. But if the laws which are revealed in the disposition and operation of the forces of nature are nothing else than the inflexible will of God, are we not in our warfare with nature fighting against God Himself? And more than this; are we not fighting against Him with the conviction that we are contending for a better world?

This may appear perplexing to us if we regard it only from one side. But there is yet another side. This same God whose will rules as law in external nature is also the source and lord of the moral world; and the rules and regulations of this world likewise are nothing else than His will. And as in nature life is maintained through the constant conflict of forces, so the warfare of the moral forces with those of nature is the fount whence the spiritual life draws its subsistence. What

appears to us as opposition is in God unity, what we perceive as discord resolves itself with Him into harmony.

Thus the recognition that everything in nature happens according to law causes no detriment to the religious or the moral life. Our fear had its root only in a vague feeling, and, after closer consideration of the question, it has proved itself to be ungrounded.

8.

But what are we to say about the effects produced by the evil actions of men? Do not these play their part in the world as something alien to and apart from the will of God? For since God cannot will what is evil, He cannot will the consequences of evil. Here then we find something which happens outside the sphere of the Divine will. Is not then God compelled to pass outside the sphere of law, in which He wills, in order that He may make the evil good again?

I heard this objection raised, but it made little impression on me. For I felt at once that it ascribed too great importance to man. And my feeling was confirmed by maturer reflection. Our acts are indeed ours only in the smallest degree. Our disposition, our education, and countless other external influences have more effect upon our character and each of our actions than we generally imagine. And what is the extent of the influence of our acts? Infinitely small it is in regard to the universe. Even in the case of the immediate environment it is circumscribed on all sides. A thousand counteracting influences caused it or gave it a direction of which we perhaps had not even thought. We perform good and evil, but that which is performed belongs to us no longer; it plays its tiny part in the mighty relations of the great universe which unfold themselves according to immutable laws, and can no more be disturbed by us than the movements of the heavenly bodies.

This is true not only of the day labourer but also of the great world conqueror. For even if the life of the latter has left behind itself mighty traces in the history of mankind, these are not due to the man himself. He is only a burning glass through which many forces summed up in mankind pass like rays of light, and are concentrated so as to ignite the mass of fuel ready to be burned. The rays of light and the fuel are there without his intervention, he is the lens because of the disposition and station that nature has given him. His own part in his actions is perhaps less than that of many a man unknown to fame, who has only a small sphere of influence.

As I was considering these things, there came into my mind the proverb: "God takes care that the trees do not sprout up into Heaven." Man can never, through that which he does in his own power, exert such an influence in the universe that the law which reigns therein, the one and indivisible will of God, must as it were reach out beyond itself

so as to over-rule the consequences of human action.

We may accept this result in all humility without fearing that thereby the distinction between good and evil or our moral responsibility has been annulled. It is not through the results or through causes outside ourselves that our action acquires the character of good or evil, but through the part we have had in it, the measure of will we have applied to it. So far, too, we are responsible for the action.

How far this extends to the case of other men is beyond our ken; and so we can judge no one. As for ourselves, our conscience, in so far as it is healthy and exercised in right judgment, proclaims our responsibility.

The moral world is an inward world. Here a man can oppose God as an enemy and can cast himself loose from allegiance to Him. But this fact implies no limitation of God, it is included in the law of moral development, which, like all laws, is His will.

9.

A ship is on fire at sea. All that are in her are brought face to face with the king of terrors as they sway to and fro on the vast ocean that may soon be their grave. Some are good and some are evil. One has shamefully deserted wife and children, another is voyaging into a far country to provide for his people. One is carrying away with him gain won by dishonesty, another purposes to found a new home for himself by the sweat of his brow. This man seeks to escape the punishment for some crime, that man stands in the service of his calling. Here is a low mind that seeks only for satisfaction of its desires, there a lofty spirit that lives a life of high aims; here is a blasphemer, there a saint; here one that is at enmity with mankind, there a loving heart. One stands alone in the world and no one will mourn his death, the life of another is the daily object of fervent prayers.

But the flames rage on, the fury of the storm

continues; no ship comes in sight to the rescue. One boat puts off, takes its chance on the unknown deep. Manned with both good and evil, it reaches a haven of safety. Another that is overloaded upsets and scatters in the waves its inmates, both good and evil. At last the ship sinks and drags down into her grave all that are left, both good and evil. Then I thought of the words, "The loving kindness of the Lord is for ever and ever upon them that fear Him," and with a heart aching with doubt, I asked, "Where is *now* the loving-kindness of the Lord?"

A broken-down man lies in the hospital nursed by strangers. His gaze is fixed, his face expressionless. Long indeed must he have suffered before he reached this condition. Once there was fire in those eyes, and life in those features. But they have been quenched by long and hopeless suffering. There was in him much goodwill to accomplish something, to win life's prize. But disease was his fate from childhood; it frustrated all his efforts

and remorselessly held him in the bonds of poverty. He suffered the punishment of another's guilt. His father had lost a great fortune and the constitution of a giant in the slough of vice. And so his son was poor and diseased, and though he strove against his fate with the best of wills, yet now after struggles and privations of indescribable bitterness he must close his life helpless and among strangers. I saw him and heard his story; there came into my mind a text: "God is Love." Then darkness enshrouded my heart.

I could not deny that such things do not agree with our human conceptions of kindness and love. We regard it as noble in man that he show pity even to the evil; but with the powers of nature both good and evil are delivered alike to terror and death. If a man permits the innocent to suffer for the guilty we call him unjust; but according to the law of nature the son must bear the consequence of the sins of the father.

I wished to shut my eyes to these facts, but

I heard the voice of conscience saying: Thou shalt not lie. Aye, if I believed that I was compelled to lie in order to save God's honour I should most shamefully profane it.

10.

I could not lie, I could not deny the facts that faced me. But this I said to myself: If these facts are such as to make thee doubt concerning God, the fault can only be in thine own conceptions of Him.

And in fact if I imagined that God could cause all these things to be otherwise than they are, then indeed I should not know how to satisfy the questionings of my soul. If He were able at the time of the common calamity to separate the good from the evil, and to rescue the good, why did He not do so? And if it were possible so to change the law of heredity that only the blessing of the good ancestor, but not the curse of the evil, were

handed down to the descendant, why is not the change made?

While I was asking myself these precisely stated questions, I saw clearly how foolish they were. We cannot measure God by human standards. He chooses not as a man, but He governs as God.

In Him we find no action of arbitrary will, but only divine necessity. Every detail must fit in with the law of the whole. It is presumption to judge the detail from a human standpoint.

Ask not after the wherefore, for this is childish, but bow thy knee before the Infinite and pray in silence. Submit—but not with a rebellious heart, nor even with a broken spirit. Say not: The Truth is bitter, it demands the sacrifice of my sweetest dream, my faith in the Divine Love.

Thou hast not dreamed if thou didst believe in the love of God. Is it not rather that the conceptions thou hast formed are altogether imperfect? Therefore thou needst not to

restrain thyself from gazing into all things, to veil thine eyes when looking into the world. Nothing threatens thy faith; thou mayest trust with confidence as before that all which God does is perfect and good. Only thou oughtest not to measure it with human measurement or call that loveless with God which is so with men. Thou oughtest not to dwell on the particular, but to have an anticipating sense of the whole. Thou oughtest not to wish to see, but to believe.

11.

In many instances indeed it is possible for us to perceive that what we imagine to be imperfect is quite otherwise when regarded from a higher point of view. The war with the elemental forces is the cause of the development of human power. It is through suffering and strife that man has reached his high station, as history and science teach us. The truth that the highest virtues are the fruit of

adversity was known ages ago. Disease and poverty are ills, but while they make some men apathetic and godless, in others they create high moral power and pure piety. The grave lies open before all men; but while one man at the sight of it recognises with horror the worthlessness of all the endeavours of his life, the other casts therein only his sins and infirmities that he may become free.

But this thought could not solve for me all the riddles of life. Indeed the more I busied myself with them the more they seemed to increase upon me; nor could I understand how so many can so speak of the counsel of God as if all were as clear to them as the light. But this very insufficiency of our understanding, while it warns us against conceit, ought also to preserve us from despair. For if anything seems to us incomprehensible, it does not therefore follow that it must be unreasonable; and if in certain difficult situations our mind can find no way of escape, it is not thereby proved that there is no such

way. We arrive very quickly at the limits of our understanding. Woe to us if faith also then fails us.

My faith is worth more to me than earthly happiness. If I see Heaven opened and look upon the Father's face, all may be dark around me, but in my heart there is light. If I can love Him, if I feel in my soul the comfort and peace of His spirit, then the whole world may fall in ruin, yet I abide what I am, His child. I can serve Him in action and in suffering, each as He appoints for me; and when at last my life reaches its close, and I must die, it matters not whether men call the cause of death an ordinary sickness or an extraordinary disaster. And so fate can bring me nothing that disturbs me. I have indeed many wishes for myself, but if the will of God is opposed to them, I am resolved to sacrifice them and to praise Him for that I may live and die in His love.

So with those terrible disasters which befall my fellow-men. They arouse within me the

keenest sympathy, they incite me to make the most earnest efforts to give help, but they cannot take from me my faith; they only make me feel more deeply the need thereof.

12.

I entered the abodes of vice. Scowling visages stared at me, savage hatred of all that is holy was expressed in every word. Their only prayer was a curse, they craved only for the satisfaction of their lowest desires, their mind was set upon crime, labour was for them the oppression of a hateful burden. Pale-faced and filthy children regarded me with insolent and lowering countenances. I could see at once that they had never experienced love and had never seen goodness, but had long ago become acquainted with the secrets of ungodliness. The sight cut me to the heart. Ah! it is indeed no fault of theirs; the way of vice was marked out for them, and there was nothing in them that could lead them by

another path. They were lost before they could even think.

This is the hardest problem that I have met with in life. It is not only that men suffer in body for the sins of their fathers, but that so many men in the cottages of the poor, as in the palaces of the rich, have from childhood inhaled so continually the poisoned breath of sin that a healthy spiritual life is impossible for them. Some, it is true, are rescued, but how many are carried down the stream and must sink therein, for no hand is outstretched to save them. Aye, they must sink, through no fault of their own.

I have thought, I have meditated much concerning this, and I have found no answer. Unfathomable darkness lies before my eyes. There is no ray of light to enlighten the gloom. But am I therefore to resign myself to despair? Am I to fling myself into the abyss because I see others there? Am I to slay myself because others are dead?

Lord, Thy ways are hidden from my sight.

The distance is veiled in night; only a little space round me is bright with Thy light. I will not stare into the darkness like one in a dream, but I will go the way which lies illumined before me. Thou knowest why so many blossoms are barren and fall, but if I can abide and come to fruit, I would not pluck myself from the tree.

The Good is good even if the way to it is barred before many, and Faith in the love of God is the life of the soul, even if many souls come not to this life. I would believe, I would love, and to each one who can hear me I would call: Come, beloved, let us live in the light.

13.

I have discussed these thoughts concerning God and Nature with many men, and I have heard objections raised from two opposite standpoints.

Some said: "You err in that you think of God as personality. How can the Infinite

have knowledge and will? how can It love? The object of all these faculties is the individual, and therefore one can only assign them to an individual soul, to a finite spirit. If you predicate them of God, you arrive at self-contradiction; indeed, as you yourself confess, your gaze on all sides loses itself at last in obscurity. An universal law is something altogether different from what we call Will, and the Unlimited becomes limited if we think of it as human personality."

The champions of the other standpoint declared: "Your God is an undefined Being, apart from human thought, in whom one cannot trust, whom one cannot love. The heart of man seeks a friend in Heaven who will protect him against the oppressive force of the tyrant universe that encompasses him. Our spirit desires communion with a Spirit with whom it can converse as with its fellow. Such an one we cannot recognise in a Being whose will is immutable law."

I have examined and weighed these objec-

tions. I was compelled to admit that my thoughts were not free from self-contradiction. But I could not make up my mind to leave the path I had chosen, and to turn from it either to the right hand or to the left.

If I look into the world around me, into nature and the life of men, I find law reigning supreme. The facts of my external experience speak so clearly that I cannot contradict them. If I turn my gaze within upon the inner world of my own soul, I find myself compelled to base my spiritual life upon a God whom I may love as the Father and Archetype of the human spirit. And so, unless I desire to see only one side, I find that two truths confront me, although I cannot combine them in one single clear conception.

Then I asked: Why not? And I found a very simple answer: I am finite and God is Infinite. How could it be possible for me to comprehend Him? He cannot but be inconceivable to me.

In my mind there are, as it were, two lines

of thought which lead me to Him; but the point where they intersect lies beyond the limits of my mental vision.

So far as my knowledge goes, events occur in two ways—either in accordance with law or as the offspring of conscious will. The two ways are one in the Infinite. Since they appear to me mutually exclusive, their unity must be beyond the reach of my comprehension.

I must regard the Power that moves the Universe as law, for this is what my experience of life forces upon me; again, I must regard this Power as personal will, for the God in whom I seek the basis and the end of my own personal spiritual life cannot be one inferior to me in consciousness, will, and goodness. He cannot be lacking in that life which is the highest known to me. But that which I call the Law of Nature is more than what I usually understand by law; and if I conceive of God as spirit, I know nevertheless that He has no part in the limitations inseparable from the idea of spirit which I

derive from my experience of human personality.

I can therefore speak of Him, of His nature, of His work, only in symbols. I am conscious all the while that these do not represent the truth in its completeness, but there is in them as much truth as I need for the conduct of my life. I cannot comprehend the sun with my eyes and concentrate all its heat upon my own body. I see only a small image of it, and I receive only the smallest portion of its warmth; but I walk in its light and I live in its brightness.

14.

In the presence of the Infinite all the pride of man is nought. Some say: "We understand nature, we have found that she has no place for a God." Others behave as if they had absolute knowledge of God, for they speak of Him as of one of themselves, they know the whole counsel of God, and can explain all

things from it as if they had been His counsellors. I would be humble, I would never forget my limitations.

But humility of mind ought not to become dejection of spirit. Nothing shall rob me of the fresh joyous energy of life. I would so foster the life of my soul that no part of it shall suffer loss. With my understanding I would seek to understand the world of phenomena which encompasses me. With my reason I would strive to understand the Good, that I may fashion myself a good man. With my heart I would in aspiration and love root myself in the One and Eternal.

Then welcome every advance in science, every good endeavour, every quickening breath of pure piety, wherever and in whatever form I meet them! Onward! I cry. Onward in all things that belong to the life of the soul. There is no contradiction in the Truth. What appears contradiction to us is so because of the limitation of our minds.

III

THE CHILD AND THE MAN

1.

I THINK of the sunny days of childhood. Then the world was small indeed and life was simple, and I was happy in my restricted sphere. God had for me a human form. I imagined Him as a friend looking down from Heaven upon His children or moving unseen about me. In the evening He closed my eyes in sleep, and in the morning He awakened me to new life. He had nothing more important to do than to order and manage my tiny affairs; no wish was so childish that I might not claim His interest in it.

How these conceptions have changed! More than once since those days the world and life have taken new shape, and with

them the Godhead. Many men bewail the change, and remember with grief those childish dreams. I cannot; for my heart belongs to the truth, and I know that I have reached a little nearer to it. Moreover I know that the truth has not proved hostile to my faith, that it has not destroyed but has intensified those feelings which once made me happy. If there have been times when an inward discord distressed me, they were only times of transition; and if even now a feeling of longing ever disturbs my peace, it is not a longing for something lost but for something not yet found. And though longing cannot dwell side by side with perfect contentment, yet it carries in itself the germ of a fuller life.

2.

I believe in Almighty God.

I indeed no longer conceive of Him as the King set upon the throne of Heaven, who looks down upon the earth, and according to His

good pleasure directs its affairs. The universe, as I now know it, extends into immeasurable space, and my mind is overwhelmed by the sense of the Infinite. Accordingly it has become ever more difficult for me to conceive of the Divine government in accordance with human ideas.

All action of which I have knowledge is limited. The Universe in its infinitude is beyond my comprehension: so is the operation of God. I know only transactions in time where one event follows another; transactions apart from time where Infinite is coincident with Infinite are by me absolutely inconceivable. I can imagine no other exercise of will than that which is fulfilled in particular resolutions; a will which is identical with the law of Nature has no analogy in my experience. Hence I perceive that I can in nowise attain to a befitting conception of the Divine government of the world.

And yet I speak of it. I speak of a will of God, and indeed of a self-conscious will. For

the will that is self-conscious is the highest that I know, and action with purpose is the most perfect that I can conceive. Hence I can only imagine the Divine will and operation by comparison with these.

I am fully conscious of the inadequacy of this comparison. But it is the only one possible for me to make, it is the sole bond that unites my thought with the omnipotence of God. In making it I am at all events much nearer the truth than if I spoke of an unconscious exercise of will and of an operation without purpose as characteristic of the Divinity. For then I should set myself above the Godhead and should declare that the pious craving of my soul is a delusion.

The truth lies not beneath me but above me. If I made up my mind to assert that God is impersonal, I could indeed find in Him the first principle of the unconscious Universe, but I myself with my personality would remain in isolation. If I think of Him as personality, I form, it is true, a conception of Him which is

altogether inadequate, yet it is the highest possible for me, and by its means I can realise to myself that He is the first principle and source of all life that is known to me.

In this sense I believe in Almighty God. I believe that completely and absolutely in body and soul, together with everything that exists, I am rooted in one and the same principle of life, and that I am therefore in harmony with the totality of existence. Thus I am certain of myself, and I feel that in God I am one both with myself and with the Universe.

And now the sense of the Infinite has no terror for me. I stand secure in my own place; and as the world opens up and spreads itself before my gaze, my heart is lifted up to ever loftier heights. It is the world of my God, and therefore mine own.

3.

I believe in the holy and omniscient God.

No longer indeed do I find it so easy to discern between good and evil; and the relation

between our actions and our lot in life seems not so simple as it once appeared. I have learned much from experience that has rudely awakened me from my dreams. I have found in the world more of the enigmatical and mysterious than the clear and intelligible. Nature is not governed by the rules which I pronounce good in a moral sense. I have seen joy blindly scattering her blessings among the deserving and undeserving. I have seen righteous and unrighteous sink together under the same stroke of fate. I have seen the godless carry through their purposes to a successful issue, while the pious fail. I have become acquainted with dark pathways of life and with poor wretches condemned to walk in them so that they can never see the light.

Then I asked: Is there in reality any difference between good and evil? Is that which we call good also good in the sight of God? Is it His will? Have our actions any significance at all for Him? Does He know of them? And I was again compelled to

admit that all my powers of mind and imagination were inadequate for the solution of these questions.

I live in the midst of the strife of things distinct and opposite; but God is the basis and the connecting bond of all that is distinct and opposite; in Him all is made one. I with my spirit stand opposed to Nature, I seek to subject Nature to the moral law within me; but in God there is no distinction between Spirit and Nature. All knowledge with which I am acquainted is of the particular which happens in time, so that at each moment I can become conscious of one thing only; a consciousness to which everything is present at every moment lies beyond my comprehension. Thus I transfer to God qualities which are as far removed from the truth as the finite is from the infinite.

And yet no consideration can prevent me from doing this, lest I should lose the very foundation of my moral life, lest in those aspirations and endeavours which are the highest I should stand alone, I should be my own law-

giver. I am as sure that this cannot be as I am that I am not my own creator.

That idea of the good, in accordance with which I strive to fashion myself and the world around me, must spring from the same first principle in which the whole life of my spirit has its source. As this can only be spirit, so also that Spirit can be nothing else than good. I cannot understand Him as He really is, but He is for me the holy One who wills that I be holy, and has implanted within me from His own nature the craving for holiness. The voice of conscience is His law within me; every act of revolt against conscience is rebellion against Him—is sin. And so my relation to Him cannot be other than personal; I cannot but say: He knows me. I realise that this knowledge is not human knowledge; it cannot however be something inferior to human knowledge, it can only be something higher.

I could indeed live a life which is morally good without the sense of my personal responsibility in His sight, but it would be a moral

life devoid of religion, devoid, that is, of the full consciousness of its basis in truth. Only then, when I bring my holiest aspirations into union with the one and eternal principle of all existence, do I wake from a life which is a dream to the clear consciousness of reality.

In this sense I believe in the holy and omniscient God. And now I am not distressed in mind when I observe in nature laws whose operations I feel to be opposed and hostile to my sense of right, laws which I must combat and subject to the moral law. For, traced to their ultimate cause in God, even things that are opposite abide in harmony, and their conflict is the expression of His will.

4.

I believe in the love of God.

I indeed think of Him no longer as a father after human fashion, who fulfils all the wishes of his children and defends them from all that troubles them. Life itself has taught me a

different lesson. I do not wish to speak of my own case. It is true that many pleasant dreams of mine have proved vain, and that my heart has suffered many a shrewd blow at the hands of fortune, and yet, as I survey it all, I can comfort myself with the thought that in truth it has been all for the best, and that my inner life could not have flourished had it not been watered with tears of sorrow. But I have seen men crushed down like a bruised worm writhing in the dust who could in no way gather to themselves strength to stand upright, men who were sick in body and soul through no fault of their own, but were suffering for the sins of former generations. I myself have looked into abysses which made the blood run cold. And yet we are told of times when suffering was yet more rife than in our days; history unveils before our eyes pictures of a human misery that surpasses the power of the boldest imagination to conceive. Here all my conceptions of love and mercy failed me, and all my attempts to evade the

confession of this failure seemed to me weak and untrue.

And yet if there is one belief beyond all others that is a necessity of the soul, it is the belief in the Divine Love. Love is the highest life to which my soul can attain. It binds being to being, it is the power by which the individual works in the whole and the whole in the individual. In nature Love rules as in a dream, in man it comes to true self-conscious life. In man Love is the fullest energy, the highest law, the most inward blessedness of the spirit; in love we by mutual self-sacrifice give of ourselves and are enriched aboundingly; we lose our souls and truly find them.

But although love satisfies far beyond all other blessings, it nevertheless stirs up in the soul the profoundest longing.

If there is within us any dormant craving, any instinctive aspiration after the Infinite, nothing awakens it and enkindles it so mightily as Love. The impulse to find satis-

faction and repose in the One, the Eternal, is never so strong as it is in the loving heart. Nowhere else is to be found a more lively sense of the Divine. And the more spiritual and unselfish love becomes in the heart, the more strongly it is felt to be a beam of a Sun which is the life of the world.

Is this illusion? Is the God whom my soul seeks with a longing desire to resign into His hands His gift of life, and to receive it from Him again wholly and in full consciousness of the gift — is He a mere phantom of the imagination? If this be so—my spiritual life must come to a full stop, and that just where the bud would unfold itself in flower; and I must pine away in the prison of my own soul. If this be so—I find no answer to the yearning cry of my heart, and I must keep silence.

But why should I thus languish? Is it because I find in the world riddles that I cannot solve? O turn from these riddles! they are without thee and are countless in number. Solve the riddle that is within thee; this is

nearest thee, and is as a veil before thy face hindering thy gaze upon the truth. So spake I to my heart, and I looked neither to the right nor to the left, but raised mine eyes to heaven and cried: My Father.

Since I can love, I also am loved of Him from whom I have my being. His love is no human love, nor will I judge of it by human standards; yet it is the source and the end of my own longing. I would say: As man I love Him, and He loves me as God.

Therefore I will suffer no decree of destiny, no blow of fate, to disturb my soul. For these belong to the outer world, and here God's working is an absolute mystery to me. Only in the soul do I trace His love. He is drawing me to Himself, and in faith I follow as He draws me. I see not, but I believe. Of that which is within me I am certain. All that is without me is only a mighty enigma.

And so I will not even ask whether the world is as my love to the brethren would have it, but I will lay my hand upon my

mouth and keep silence before that which I do not understand. I will love mankind as a man, and act towards them as love teaches me. But I will not prescribe what God must do; I will rather humbly acknowledge my complete ignorance. To Him be praise and thanks for that He has granted a life to my soul which in faith and love is nourished from His fulness.

5.

I give God thanks that He is gracious to me.

I no longer indeed look upon myself as the centre of the universe; I feel that I am as the smallest part of an infinite whole. No longer do I imagine that the world was created on my account, and that all which happens therein has reference to my welfare. I have become accustomed to the thought that everything like myself has its own end in itself. But I am heartily satisfied with my own portion, and my own life is a joy to me.

First of all I rejoice in the life of my spirit.

It is true that I have suffered many a conflict, many a pang, because what has been attained has never answered to the wish. Yet it is worth the struggle; with all its unfulfilled longing it is sweet, and I carry in my soul the blessed prophecy of a perfection to come.

The world without me also brings joy to my soul. It is beautiful, it reveals to me a wondrous fulness of divine thought veiled under its manifold appearances. In its thousand voices it speaks to my heart, and enriches me both when it bestows its bounty upon me and when it brings to me trouble. And although there is much in the world that has distressed and afflicted me, even from this I have been able to gain profit, especially for my soul.

Now if I find in God the source of my whole being and all its powers, then my joy also is joy in God. Everything that brings me happiness appeals to me as a gift from Him, and I thank Him for it.

All that I am, all that belongs to my life, I feel to be the effluence of His grace. If I have

added aught thereto, I have received it first from Him. Aye, all action of mine, in so far as it is good, is but submission to His will—the reception of His Spirit into mine. There is no merit in it, no more than in taking the food which nourishes us. On the contrary, I am conscious of many omissions and many sins. All self-righteous thoughts are excluded, and so I stand, with all that I am and all that I have, under the conviction of the Divine goodness, and my heart is overwhelmed with the feeling of pure thankfulness.

This feeling is not merely one of general thankfulness; it extends also to particular circumstances in so far as these appeal to my heart. I know that God has not created my friends for my sake, yet if the joy of our fellowship stirs my heart, I declare in thankfulness: Thou hast given them to me. I am quite sure that God has not made the sun to shine to-day just that I may walk abroad; and yet my soul praises Him as the sun shines, and as I rejoice in the beauty of the world.

I acknowledge to myself that this fruit would have grown whether it were good for me or not, and yet as I eat it I am admonished to give thanks to the giver of all good gifts. Without thanksgiving I cannot and may not live.

6.

I trust in God.

My trust indeed more than once already has met with disappointment. But that was my own fault, for I had deluded myself with false hopes. I had imagined that God must preserve me from trouble, must clear the stones from my path that I might be able to walk without stumbling. It has turned out otherwise, and I have forsaken these ideas. I am prepared for all things; I shall never be amazed even at the most terrible blows of fate. I see some of my brethren visited with the most fearful suffering. Am I in anything better than they that a similar lot should be impossible for me? I do not expect signs and

wonders, I do not fancy that God will arbitrarily interfere in the course of things for my special benefit. I know that this cannot be; and so I do not even desire it.

In place of this I recognise His ruling hand in all that comes to pass. I conceive of each particular circumstance as part of the whole, and I say to myself: I cannot understand the part so long as I cannot survey the whole.

Oh, if I could only do that! Then I am certain that I should find all absolutely flawless, and should perceive that the idea of imperfection is only a human conception, which is inseparable indeed from our feelings and actions, but ought never to be admitted into our thoughts when we lift our eyes to the Almighty.

We fashion for ourselves a picture of that to which our soul aspires, and we call it perfection. In comparison with this ideal the present is imperfect; and so the idea of imperfection necessarily pertains to that spiritual life of ours which is ever pressing onward. But in

relation to the whole, nothing is imperfect, so I must believe.

All that God does is good. Who could think it otherwise? I cannot conceive by what right I can doubt it. For assuredly I should then be compelled to doubt everything, above all, to doubt myself.

O my soul, only consider what it would mean didst thou say: All is imperfect, God's work is imperfect, but I know how all should be. Dost thou not shrink back from the absurdity of such a thought?

My soul is confident and at rest. I feel, I endeavour, as man; but God overrules as God. Within His Providence my own life is included, by His direction it takes its place in the great whole. I am what I am by His grace, by His grace also I shall be what I ought to be. I shall reach my goal. I would go my way suffering nothing to perplex me. I would not say: No ill shall befall me—but I would rest in the thought that however my lot may fall, in all trouble and in all suffering, and

even in death itself, God leads me by the hand; and if I know this, I am saved.

And so my faith will continue firm against every shock, and my trust will not waver, for I cling not to false hopes.

7.

I pray to God.

But I no longer imagine that by my prayers I can in any way influence God. Since I have come to the sense of His greatness and the knowledge of my own nothingness, this thought has become impossible for me. Insight into the law of necessity that governs the divine operation has made my mind quite clear on this point. How can the Infinite and Perfect be influenced by finite and imperfect beings, whose separate wishes are as divergent as their own natures? And how can God, who in Himself knows no caprice, be subject to the caprice of man? It is a marvel to me how for so long a time I could

have fancied that my power reached even to Him.

And when I realised this truth I was not in the least degree perplexed. For I was compelled to admit that those childish fancies had caused me much unrest. How difficult they had ofttimes made it for me to acquiesce in the inevitable! How they had driven me hither and thither between vain hope and disheartening disillusionment, such as not seldom nearly caused me to doubt in the divine love! But now I could rest, for I felt myself delivered from a load of care.

Suppose only that we were allowed to influence the Almighty; could we imagine for ourselves a more oppressive burden? When my country goes to war I wish for its victory—aye, with my whole heart. But if God were to say to me: "The decision shall be with thee; ask only, and it shall come to pass as thou willst," then I should fall trembling upon my knees and cry: Not mine, Lord, only Thy will be done! For I should at once realise that I must

undertake the responsibility for all the consequences of the event throughout the whole course of history; and I could not but faint under such a burden as that.

It would be the same in every case even if the matter in question appeared to me quite trivial; for the smallest things stand in close connection with the greatest. O God, I beseech Thee, keep omnipotence in Thine own hands; leave me but submission.

And yet do we not seek to interpose in the course of things? We follow out our own purposes, we deliberate and act, and this without imagining that it is really of no avail, and that all will be accomplished without our assistance. Is this submission to the will of God?

The objection has no force. In accordance with the will of God I work with the powers He has given me for this very purpose. But I realise that I still remain in my own narrow sphere, which corresponds to my insight and ability. And so I do my part with gladness,

in clear knowledge that mine is only human action. Far otherwise would it be were I to take Omnipotence into my service and work with its resources. Then would my joy be turned into terror, and the Infinite could not but shatter the finite vessel that contained it.

And so I have completely renounced the idea that the prayer of a man can exert an influence upon God's Providence. Yet I pray to God, nor could I dispense with such prayer. For I must pray, I must speak with God. If I call Him my Father, if believing in His love I love Him and seek in Him the source and goal of my spiritual life, then I must stand in uninterrupted intercourse with Him, I must ever direct my whole being towards Him. And these instinctive aspirations become prayer so soon as I call them into consciousness.

But this intercourse can only be personal. Though I am ever so sure that God is more than a person, yet I can converse with Him

only as a person. I know that I speak as a man, but He as God both hears and answers.

What can I say to Him? He is all, I am nothing; in Him dwells all fulness, in me only desire and aspiration. I can only open my heart that His life may flow into me; I can only give expression to my unbounded longing to be filled with His spirit and to become one with Him. Thus supplication, unbounded supplication, must be the burden of my prayer—supplication which is both complete self-renunciation and unending thanksgiving. But it is supplication for spiritual benefits, for the Holy Spirit.

And I know that this is no vain supplication, for it carries within itself its own fulfilment. Here, as God has willed it, asking and receiving are bound up together. The wish I express is nothing else than readiness to renounce all self-will. I would not influence Him to accomplish what I desire, but I open my soul to Him that He may

work in me. And so I abide within my human limitations; for this relationship to the Eternal into which I enter is that whereto He Himself has destined me.

8.

According to the point of view which I have reached, I ought never to pray for things which belong to the outward life. Yet I cannot refrain from doing so. Whether this is due to the overpowering influence of education and habit, or to some ineradicable instinct of my nature, I cannot do otherwise; I cannot but utter before God every wish that stirs the depths of my heart.

I know well that it is inconsistent to ask while knowing that one effects nothing by asking. But an instinct within me compels me; I cannot but pray thus so that I may gain the rest and balance of mind which is necessary for me, bound up as I am with

the duties and conflicts of the outward life.

Am I to use compulsion with myself? I find that in many points the life of our feelings stands in complete contradiction with reason, and yet we do not consider it necessary to repress it. Why should it be otherwise in Religion? If I call God Father, why am I not to speak with Him as a child? If I am impelled to give expression to that which moves my heart, why should I suppress the impulse within me?

And besides, all our religious conceptions even the purest are only symbols of the inexpressible, so that the clear thinker must find contradiction in all of them. It is sufficient for us if we realise this. Let us not cast away the treasure because of the earthen vessel that contains it. And so I would not use constraint with myself even where I have attained to more correct intuitions, if I have not yet discovered a form that suits my every-day religious life.

I know that by my prayers I make no change in the directing providence of God, yet I would pray as my soul moves me. When trouble oppresses me I would pour out my heart before God and tell Him what I as a man feel and desire, however little I expect Him to work a miracle. I would supplicate for those whom I love, I would send up to Heaven my wishes and my anxious petitions for their bodily and spiritual welfare, though I do not even cherish the thought that there is need of my words to influence God for their good.

This mental attitude is not peculiar to the question of prayer. I know that words have no power to assure me from fate, and I am resolved even in the bitterest trouble to trust in God, yet it is only human to hope for the best, and so even my trust takes this form, and filled with hope, I look out into the future. I know again that God is and abides holy whether it goes well or ill with the sinner, and yet I conceive of the misfortune

which his actions bring upon him as divine punishment. I know that the action of God is not directed by a capricious human will, and yet I speak continually of His acts as of the acts of a man.

Is this wrong? Is it wrong to say of the sun that it rises and sets though we know that it does not move round the earth? Though it may stand still in reality, for us it rises and sets, and our whole life is bound up most closely with this daily phenomenon. So also our religious life is bound up with ideas which express far more our relation to God than His real essence.

Perhaps a time is coming when men will speak otherwise of the Eternal, and will have converse with Him in another fashion. I cannot tell. At all events such a time has not yet arrived, and I abide by that which is natural for us at the present moment. Only let there be nothing unnatural. It is enough that we be clear in our minds concerning the imperfection and the contradictions of our

religious concepts, that we guard ourselves from harmful errors, and spiritualise our piety as much as possible. But the claims of our nature and of its historical development must be upheld.

IV

TIME AND ETERNITY

1.

We hurried on the railroad through the land, towns and villages had flown past us, and the longer the journey lasted the slighter became the impression they made upon us. At last they appeared to us like the woods and the fields, merely scenes in the landscape. I then fell into meditation. I thought: Every one of these places is a world in itself like thine own native place, every house is as thine, every man as thou thyself. Thou lookest upon them as upon ants which go their way, and the object of thine own journey occupies thy thoughts more than the sight of them. Similarly every one of them has his own aims and his own world which fill his mind. Then

I surveyed in my spirit far distant lands, and realised to myself the great multitude of the inhabiters of the earth, and found it the same everywhere. Then I said: What is the individual? and what art thou who art accustomed to regard thyself as the centre of the universe?

I read the history of the past, and the nations appeared to me as characters upon a stage. Then I bethought myself that every nation and every generation was made up of many individuals, and that in all their movements and conflicts countless men have taken their part, each of them of just so much importance as myself. Where are they now? What is the individual in the world's history? And what art thou, who from thine own standpoint regardest history as a mere drama?

I am nothing — this was always the immediate answer of my own feeling when I thus reflected. And I knew that it was good for me often to ask such questions, often to answer them as I had done. For one cannot

take too great care to crush that ridiculous and pernicious spirit of pride which suffers man's little soul to dream that God and the universe exist only on his behalf.

Yet I found that the spirit of self-depreciation, by which man in the sense of his own nothingness loses himself, was not less dangerous. Every plant and every animal is what it is; why should not a man be what he is? Even though thou art so small in comparison with the whole, thou art yet something and canst be a whole in thyself. Resolve to be that whereto thou art destined! resolve within thine own limitations to live a full life! Suffer each individual to make the same resolve!

Pride and self-depreciation are nearly allied, and together sap the health of the soul. We need humility and self-confidence.

2.

I wandered among graves and read the inscriptions on the tombs. They told of

bitter sorrow and burning anguish, but the dates were old, and I thought: This is all past and forgotten, and the passion which once seemed unquenchable has died out long ago. But they told also of true love and of the joy of a life that was shared together. This, too, had vanished as the blossoms of the past years. And I said: Why do we make so much of life's joys and sorrows which last but a moment? They are not worthy that our heart should be disturbed for them.

I came at length to graves that had been freshly made, and I saw a woman and two children standing by a mound wreathed with flowers. Her pale and grief-stricken face with one stroke scattered to the winds all my cold-blooded reflections; and in hearty sympathy I felt the sorrow of the world, and thought: O that I could but comfort thee and give thee thy lost one back again! But the children showed one another the flowers, they cried with joy as a butterfly settled upon them; and then again they turned to their mother

with questioning looks. How happy the parents must have been in the possession of these dear little ones! I could not turn my eyes away from them, and I felt as it were a gleam of sunshine in my heart. Woman, thou wast rich and art still not poor. Dost thou understand what thy children say to thee? For them thou shouldest live, thou shouldest make them happy and be thyself happy in them. In truth there is happiness upon earth.

We love indeed to ascend the mountains and look down upon the world at our feet. There the prospect is wide and the heart beats high, and we feel ourselves lifted above what is small and trivial. But we descend again, for it is in the world beneath us that we have our habitation, our work, our friends. So it is good and needful for our souls that we sometimes survey the earthly life, with its joys and sorrows, from above, and realise that it is only a small part of a great whole. And yet we belong to it, and cannot and ought not to withdraw ourselves from it. I would not by

self-deception conjure away its sorrows; I would in thankfulness partake of its joys; I would fulfil its duties and feel myself a man among men. With my brethren would I laugh and weep, with them would I labour, with them would I strive to make life as full and as beautiful as we can, and to keep my heart warm and quick in sympathy with all that concerns us together.

3.

I saw the peasant working in the heat of the sun, and the operative fixed in his place amid the uproar of machinery. I learned to know the manufacturer who with sharp eye and careful heart superintends a wide-spreading business, and the state official who under the burden of a great responsibility discharges his high office. I met with the scholar in a world of thoughts which seemed to have little connection with everyday life, and I encountered the artist amid his enchantments.

Grand and marvellous it seemed to me as I surveyed it all. I was amazed at the richness of human life which unfolds itself through the co-operation of so many activities. I feasted my eyes on this mighty organism so wondrously constituted. But as I fixed my gaze upon the individuals, my heart was moved by a different feeling. How many of these must toil and moil in soulless labour, whilst but few can partake of the joy of the mind in creation and invention. How tremendous is the difference between the content of the life of a labourer and that of the statesman or investigator. And this must be so, and can never be otherwise, for it is grounded in the very nature of human life. These considerations oppressed my soul, and for a long time I could not come to a settled mind concerning them.

A fuller experience of life first showed me the question from another side. I learned to know the labouring population nearer at hand, and I found there a moral power and a

richness of good feeling that astounded me. And I ofttimes found such grievous lowness of mind and heartlessness in the circles of the highest culture and among the most exalted professions, that I learned to judge these social distinctions from quite another standpoint. I recognised that a man whose mind is set upon goodness grows morally strong in all labour which is not useless or pernicious; for the soul lives and grows in action and creation. And if self-renunciation is an essential element in morality, then strenuous labour can only advance morality, if only it be in right relation to the strength of the labourer and does not cripple him through its excess.

But as regards the worthiness of the object to which labour is dedicated, I found that the man who provides food or clothing or other bodily necessaries for mankind can be as much impressed with the importance of his production as the scholar or artist. And why not? The bodily requirement is as necessary for us as

the mental, and the moral goodness of the labourer depends not upon that which he produces, but upon the way in which he produces it. If he feels himself to be a useful member of society, and in this consciousness does his duty, let no one bemoan him as though his calling were unworthy.

And besides, let it be remembered that by his labour he acquires the means of life for himself and his family. The life of the community has its root in the self-support of the individual and in the stability of the family. The thought, that through one's own strenuous effort one is something in the world and even provides for others, vastly heightens moral self-consciousness and moral force; and I have found fathers and mothers among labourers of the lowest class whose moral worth was such as the cultured dilettante never reaches.

And are they wanting in nurture for their souls? Are not the richest spiritual fountains free and open to them all? They have often a deeper appreciation of nature, their family life

is more intimate, their mutual converse in joy and sorrow is more living and sincere, than in circles where sunlight is replaced by lamplight, and the language of the heart supplanted by conventional phrases. But above all, nowhere does the real meaning of religion declare itself so strikingly as in the life of the so-called lower classes ; and by most delightful experience I have learnt that religion produces a culture of the heart which cannot be attained to by anything that is usually called culture.

4.

I call to mind how often I have been both shamed and instructed by quite simple folk, and how many doubts of my brooding mind have vanished when I have come into touch with such people. I have looked into many a weatherbeaten face, and have been even startled by the tender light which shone in the eyes and testified to a wondrous peace within. Moved by the deepest compassion, I have

visited men, the mere report of whose awful fate had made me miserable, and I have left them again with my heart uplifted and consoled.

And these were partly men of the lowest classes. Poor widow in thy narrow shabby little room—thou that art so hardly tried, who waitest the end in loneliness and sickness—how canst thou endure thy hard lot? Thy life has been made up of trouble, anxiety, and want; thy home had but one guest—the cross; thy husband went his own way and left thee only labour, care, and those children in whose rearing thou didst wear out thy strength. Thou didst deny thyself that thou mightest fulfil thy duty towards them and not one has gone astray; but they have all passed to the grave before thee, and but lately thy last son, he that should have been the prop of thy old age, was borne from thy door. How may I comfort thee? But, behold! thou comfortest me. Though thou dost mourn, thou art yet so contented with thy God, that there is no need to attempt to justify Him in thy eyes.

Thou lookest back upon thy past life so calmly and so thankfully, thou gazest into the future so confidently. Thou art not alone, for with God thou speakest as with thy friend ever present with thee, thou abidest in communion with thy children safe as thou knowest from all the storms of earth, thou awaitest with longing for the hour which for thee also will open the gate of the heavenly home.

O that I could but bring hither all that are plagued by doubt! I would ask them:—Do ye not feel how pitifully your doubtful groping compares with her assured steadfast progress? Does not this open your eyes? do ye not see that your doubts are but terrifying dreams?

Let me ask the proud scoffers this question: If this woman had not her faith, what could ye give her to enable her to endure her hard fate? How would ye fare with all your wisdom if her lot were yours? Cold, bitter resignation to the inevitable—this would be the best whereto ye could attain; but there could be no life in your souls.

Happy indeed am I if I can merely understand the faith of this widow; how much more when I share it. And although there is much in our belief which I should express otherwise than she, still I wish for nothing else than to feel as she feels.

5.

Beautiful and uplifting is the simplest human life when it flows on in purity and holiness, and the loving heart in faith is loosed from its fetters. I know nothing that I more love to see. It is like a greeting from a higher world, and affords a glimpse of the connecting links of time and eternity. Then it is so easy to believe in eternal life.

But how many a life I must behold whose misery fills me with unspeakable sorrow. Turbid and foul it creeps on its course amid the mire of sin, or it fades away in the sands of poverty and wretchedness. The heart is cold, oppressed by mean cares, benumbed by selfishness, enslaved by low desires; and the eye is

fixed upon the ground. Insufficient nourishment, unhealthy employment, and other purely external influences check the soul's development, so that the formation of a higher self-consciousness is impossible, and there is nothing to be discovered which is worthy or even capable of eternal existence. Often again the soul that has attained to a high plane of development is overwhelmed by disease, and many a noble spirit has vanished from before the loving eyes of his friends through madness, or in the infirmities of old age. It is a sight that moves one to unceasing grief, and I have often realised how it is that even good men have sorrowfully rejected the thought of an eternal destiny for man. Indeed I have been myself tempted to do likewise.

But never for long. I have always returned to faith again, for I recognised that in surrendering my belief in eternal life I should surrender myself and declare the whole life of my soul to be a delusion.

The result of my whole development is this

—I have become spirit, and have gained the sense of a life that is complete and real. Is such a life one that, after appearing but for a moment, sinks back again into annihilation?

I have conceived the thought of perfection, and I behold in the far distance a shining goal which attracts me with the power of an earnest longing. How should I find the courage to strive towards it did I know that I shall never reach it?

Led by the impulse within me, I have cast myself into the bosom of the eternal love, and there I have found myself. How can I think that I shall again lose myself?

I cannot halt half-way. If I have affirmed the beginnings of my spiritual life, I will not deny its perfection. If I have ventured to believe in myself and in God, I must also believe in an eternal life. If aspiration and endeavour had not become the life of my soul, I should not direct my thought onward. But now that the development has begun, I will not cry halt.

6.

I do not try to make it conceivable to myself how it is possible that I can exist, and what form life will take, when my body has fallen into dust; for I perceive that these things are incomprehensible. But is my present state of existence at all less incomprehensible? Has anyone ever explained what existence is, and how it is possible that a self-consciousness can be conjoined with a body? Were we not accustomed to this fact, it would most certainly appear to us absolutely miraculous; and indeed there have been times when wonder at my own nature has seized upon me with overwhelming power. No enigma of the future life is more difficult than that of the present. Yet who would annul himself because he does not understand his own existence?

If then the life of the soul within the body is something incomprehensible, I cannot expect that what happens at death can be

explained more easily. I see that the elements of the body come to dissolution, but I have absolutely no knowledge as to what happens to myself. I stand in the presence of a mystery. It makes no difference whether death comes suddenly or gradually, whether I go down into the grave in full possession of the powers of my mind, or die already before my death in madness or in the infirmities of age. If death is a sleep from which there is an awakening, it is the same however long it lasts.

Am I selfish because I wish to live? If so, all life is selfishness, and selfishness is no longer a fault. And if the renunciation of the belief in immortality is self-denial, then the suicide is still more self-denying.

All is not virtue that seems so. It is our duty to sacrifice ourselves if God demands it of us. But if the Father says: "Thou art, and shalt ever be, My child"—then it is not right to sit down wrapt in doubt and sorrow. We must assert our high dignity,

we must stand up and go on our way with joy.

7.

The conception of an eternal life is usually mingled with ideas of reward and punishment. So far as I am concerned I do not find that this is so.

I do not know why I should be rewarded. I am so thoroughly convinced that I am absolutely devoid of merit, that the thought of a reward is to me at least quite impossible. I cannot conceive otherwise than that I live by God's free gift, and therefore my hope also is based only upon the faith that God will perfect what He has begun in me.

And what have I to do with fear of punishment? I do not require it to terrify me into the path of righteousness. For if I needed such a means I should feel that my moral and religious aspirations were wanting in sincerity, and that would be as bad as sin. When my conscience testifies that I am unworthy

of the divine love, I know that this is absolutely true, and yet I should not know the meaning of faith in the grace of God if I thought that because of my unworthiness I must doubt.

And so I cannot accuse myself that my faith in an eternal life has sprung from my desire for a reward, or is a makeshift to prop up a morality which cannot stand upon its own feet. I know that it is nothing else than the necessary consequence of my spiritual life; and of this life I must be fully convinced if I would really live it. I believe in order that I may be able to live as a man.

The testimony of a thousand souls assures me that many have the same need. If others, and among them even noble souls, assure me that they feel it not, I cannot deny my very self. I do not enquire whether they deceive themselves, or whether they are really constituted differently from myself; I judge them not. But I cannot, because of them, stunt myself.

I do not allow myself to be perplexed by

cross-questionings such as these: What becomes of those in whom the spiritual principle is ruined through neglect? What promise is there in them for eternity? Are infants also immortal? or when is it in the continuous development of the soul that the moment arrives at which the possibility of immortality begins? Such questions are vain and unprofitable. I cannot see into a man's soul, nor can I decide whether he has or has not within him a germ of eternal life that is capable of development. Therefore I say nothing concerning these things. Only I know what is in myself, and this would I never suppress. I would not even refrain from speaking of my faith, and I feel myself uplifted when my word finds an echo in the heart of a brother.

8.

I am asked: Can you truly say that the life you live is really a happy one? You

wander about with your gaze fixed upon the far future, assuredly you thus lose the present. You press forward unceasingly, so that the life which now is must lose its attraction for you. Happier surely — happier by far is he who ever lives wholly and gladly for the moment and is free from this consuming longing, he who is satisfied with his present condition.

I have not heard this question unmoved. It awakens in me a certain note of sorrow. I must confess that something is wanting in me; and as a matter of course this must be so; for he that aspires does not possess that which he seeks. There are however other questions which may be asked with the same justification as this.

Is not the ignorant man more happy than he that has some knowledge? For we cannot know everything, and partial knowledge brings much unrest to the soul. And ought we not to account him in whom conscience slumbers to be happier than he in whom it is alert?

For as no one is without sin, conscientiousness is inseparable from manifold distress of heart. And as a last question, one might ask: Is not the butterfly kissing the flowers in the sunshine a happier being than the man who thinks and listens to a voice within him which he yet never quite understands? There is, indeed, a grain of truth in these questions, and yet no one would therefore counsel us to cast from ourselves knowledge and conscience and human life.

It is not in our power to determine what we would be. We must be what we are destined to be. And if we cannot be this without suffering, then we must bear the suffering. Moreover the simplest principles of morality teach us that all that is good must be gained by conflict, and that a noble disposition ripens only by self-denial. Restless aspiration is the guiding principle of the history of the human race. Why should it be otherwise in the history of the individual? As man I must aspire and set up my goal afar; and I would rather dis-

pense with the feeling of perfect satisfaction than with my hopes and longings.

And yet, when all is said, I am not so unhappy that I need bemoan myself. On the contrary I feel myself so rich in my faith that my joy over that which I possess outweighs any sorrow for what is lacking. I do not crave for the peace of insensibility, I joy in my life as I march with my face forwards. I do not dwell in dreams of the future; I do not waste my time in painting mental pictures of what is to come, nor do I luxuriate in feelings and fancies. This would be mere slothfulness. I know that the duties of life claim every power that I possess, and that unless the soul consciously dedicates itself to each moment as it passes the moment is lost. Therefore I strive always to live completely and entirely for the present. But the present must be irradiated by the light of eternity.

O that I might only see my way clear before me illumined by this light! O that I were delivered from all doubt and unrest, and that

a spirit of full unswerving confidence were formed in me! Then would my free spirit dedicate itself unreservedly to the present with all its duties, and in its own sphere would live a life like that of the butterfly in the sunshine. The fruition of Joy lies not behind but before. I must endeavour to attain to it by seeking to fulfil myself.

V

CRITICISM AND PASTORAL WORK

1.

"WHAT claim can faith make to certainty? It is concerned with surmises and not with knowledge, and therefore, by its very nature, partakes of uncertainty." So I have often heard it very confidently stated.

Then I asked: What is this knowledge which it is alleged can alone ensure certainty? and upon what is it based?

What I see and hear or otherwise perceive with the senses, this I account certain. But why? Because I trust my senses, and believe that they impart truth to me.

I know that the things that I perceive are not things in themselves, but only my impressions of the things. And yet I take for granted

that realities answer to the perceptions. Why so? I have no proof, but I believe it.

I hold as certain the conclusions which I have arrived at by the methods of logical thought. What justification have I for this? I trust my mind, and believe that its laws are founded upon truth.

The whole edifice of our thought is established upon a multitude of axioms which we not only cannot prove, but even regard as requiring no proof. Why is this? Because there must be a beginning, something of which one can say—this is. From nothing, nothing can follow.

So I found that the whole sum of our knowledge rests upon no other basis than a kind of faith.

"All this may be true," someone may say, "but there is a distinction to be noted here. The trustworthiness of our knowledge is guaranteed to us by the fact that the laws of thought are alike in all men, and by the universal agreement to the truths of the

understanding which follows as a consequence of this similarity; whilst religious faith is a personal matter and takes different forms in different persons."

I must admit the force of this objection. But does the case stand otherwise with moral truths? Here also the opinions of different nationalities and periods of times, as well as of persons, are not alike. But no man who is really a good man allows himself to be perplexed by this fact. If, for example, he is assured that it is right to deny himself, to act lovingly and to keep his word, he does not regard this as a mere personal opinion that has no claim to general acceptance. He cannot give any logical proof of these axioms of his conduct, nor can he enforce universal agreement to them. Yet he does not think: "This is my own opinion, but it is just as possible that selfishness and unfaithfulness are morally good." On the contrary he asserts positively: "These things are right." Upon what basis does his conviction rest? Upon

an instinctive feeling which he affirms. It is a certainty which, just as in the case of religion, depends upon faith.

2.

As for myself, I am certain of my faith, and I know upon what it is founded. But can I expect all men to believe as I do?

The very fact that in the religious sphere the difference of views is so much greater than in the moral sphere signifies that the cases are different. And indeed how can agreement in views be possible if all conceptions of faith are only symbols of the Infinite as it is surmised in the soul?

Each man seeks in God what is for him the highest. How then can all men seek the same thing in God, seeing that there are such various degrees of spiritual development. The soul of each is moved by the Infinite like a lyre in which the breeze calls forth its own distinct note. How can all notes be alike

when souls are so manifold in character? And then the feeling which is awakened in the soul must take shape in an idea, and be expressed in words which can only hint at the inward sense but cannot fully render it. In all these processes imagination and understanding play their part. How can it be otherwise than that even where the ideas have the same content their form should be dissimilar?

If the formation of faith depended solely upon the action of the individual soul, each man would then have a separate creed. It is due solely to the fact that men are bound together in society, and to their consequent dependence upon historical development, that there are such things as religious groups, communities that agree in some creed which has been founded by the personal force of some great leader and has been preserved by the influence of an educating Church. But the greater the scope given to independent development, the greater must be the differences of faith that come to light.

This lies in the very nature of the case and is not to be wondered at. Nor can it perplex one who knows how to distinguish the living principle of religion from the religious idea.

3.

I cannot expect that all should have the same faith as myself, and yet I once expected this, and my present conviction of my error has cost me a struggle.

It was not so difficult for me to understand a mode of religious expression which was strange to me. But I found it hard to appreciate a difference in the feeling itself. How was I to explain to myself this lofty soul which strives after moral perfection and yet absolutely rejects faith as a delusion, or that superficial mind which neither cares nor finds time to listen to the voice within, or that gloomy character which hates religion and flies into a passion when it comes into contact with anything religious. It was hard

for me to understand such men, yet for the sake of truth and love I have endeavoured to do so. I have investigated the history of their lives, and they have ceased to be a marvel to me. I have tried to put myself in their place, and have learned to understand much concerning them.

In the case of many a noble character it has been impossible for the religious impulse to develope in the soul, because even from childhood another end has been set so clearly before his eyes that every thought and energy have been devoted to its attainment. Distinguished men have perhaps exercised an overpowering influence upon him even in childhood. As a youth he aspired to rival them, to attain to their position in the world, to perform like them some notable action; and this aspiration so completely dominated his soul that it repressed other emotions. And he perhaps gained his experience of religion from unworthy representatives, whose narrowness of mind, whose spiritual pride,

whose arrogant and foolish chatter afforded a repulsive contrast to the unrestricted fearless gaze and moral excellence of his heroes. He even heard those same religious people condemn what seemed to him noble and sacred. Is it not natural that the religious principle languished in his soul, though under other conditions it might perhaps have developed to powerful life? Can we wonder that religion at last impressed him as something hostile to his highest ideals?

The claims of our age upon the aspirations and the actions of men are so great and so manifold that it has become very difficult for many to attain to that spirit of meditation and calm self-recollection which is necessary if the soul is to be brought into communion with the Eternal. It is not always a sign of superficiality if a man says: "I have no time to busy myself with religious matters." That ceaseless hurry of activity which we so often meet with in men does not spring only from an immoral craving after gain. There is

really a superabundance of hard sincere work, there are stations in life which make such tremendous demands upon the time and the powers of a man, that one can easily understand how hard it is for him to compose himself to meditation. If the work is of such a kind that the thoughts are entirely occupied by and directed towards high aims, then the work in itself affords some recompense for this deficiency, so that it makes itself less felt. But how often the work is such as to distract and to drive the soul hither and thither among trivialities which have no moral significance unless they are regarded from some higher standpoint. In such instances I have sometimes noticed in men of noble character a lamentable condition of spiritual poverty and dissatisfaction, which they themselves readily acknowledged by expressing their yearning for rest. But it had become beyond their power to take the first step towards God.

It is another matter if this first step has been taught in childhood, if by means of

continual education the religious principle has developed healthily to a firm and grounded faith. Then is the fountain open whence the spirit may draw refreshment, even in the exhausting atmosphere of the commonplace. But, alas, how many lack a religious education in youth as well as in after life! Can the germ in their nature develope apart from impelling influences from without? No more than the corn can grow in the store-house.

Education is the soil, the rain, and the sunshine of the human spirit, education—from the first influences of the home to the sum of all the impressions which we have continually received and still receive from the world of men around us. This became clearer to me the more I observed mankind and myself. And so I no longer marvelled if I met those who felt otherwise than I, and had no understanding for that which moves my heart. I set myself in their place and asked myself the question: How wouldest thou feel if the

history of thy life had been as theirs? And wouldest thou understand one who spoke to thee as thou speakest to them?

Moreover, I have been sometimes driven to doubt whether it is true that all men by nature have a disposition to Religion and feel the need of faith. I have met with cases which suggested the conclusion that many men have by nature as slight and feeble a feeling for religion as others have for music. I do not venture to assert this as a fact, but the thought of its possibility has made me doubly careful in my judgments. At all events natural disposition is not alike in every case, and influences which have a good effect upon one man can be mischievous to another. And so it oftentimes happens that a similar education leads two men in opposite directions.

4.

I understand the causes of the difference in religious thinking and feeling among men.

Must I then bewail it? Should I wish that these differences may cease, and that all may feel and think in the same way as I?

People say indeed: "There can only be one truth, and he who is convinced that he possesses the truth must wish that it should be known to all men." But do I possess the truth?

I have come to see clearly that our religious ideas are only imperfect symbols; I cannot therefore assert that mine are perfect. That however which is imperfect is in need of perfection. Hence I can only wish that men, and myself among them, may attain to ever greater purity in their religious ideas. But this is more likely to happen if our conceptions are different, and because of their difference exert a purifying influence upon one another, than if we agreed in one conception and could not therefore become conscious of its imperfection. In my own case at least I have always found that nothing is more beneficial to my own soul than an

honest investigation of another's ideas when they are different from my own.

But ought the same reasoning to apply to the case of religious feeling? Is it not desirable that all men should turn to God with the same love, and with open heart should listen to Him whenever He reveals Himself? Yes indeed, I wish it with all my heart, and I mourn over every suppression of the religious instinct, whether it come about through a man's own guilt or through the influence of his environment.

Only here too I have discovered the danger of an error into which I with many others have often fallen, the error of confusing the feeling of piety with its expression. He whose lips overflow with that which fills his heart readily imputes coldness and indifference to him who keeps his most sacred convictions carefully locked up in his own breast. And yet in both cases the feeling may be equally strong, only the natures are different. From the same religious conviction one man devotes

himself to religious life in public fellowship with others, another goes on his way alone and seeks God in secret. The man of feeling tenderly cherishes and carefully cultivates his inner life, and is entranced with joy at the blossoms which reward his efforts; the man of action no sooner feels than he wills, and from insignificant blossoms of feeling developes the rich fruit of useful work. One of dependent nature like some creeping plant can only flourish well and fruitfully by clinging to some fixed tradition, and therefore for him the essence of piety consists in self-suppression and submission to authority; whilst he that is by nature fitted for independent growth feels bound to enquire for himself and to fashion his own creed, and in this impulse of his nature he hears the voice of God, to whose direction he surrenders himself.

The natures of men are very different, and the difference becomes accentuated by education and environment, so that men who are really pious often completely misunderstand

one another. But ought we to wish that the religious life should be always after one pattern? That were as absurd as to wish that in nature life should take but one form. In creation the immeasurable richness of formations in which a creative power finds expression moves our admiration. What right have we to complain of the same thing in the world of men?

5.

"If religious ideas and the outward expression of the life of piety must be different in different people, are we justified in promoting our own views by exercising influence upon others? Ought we not to rest satisfied with the fact that we hold them ourselves?" I have often heard this conclusion drawn, generally by those who would justify their own reserve or wished to protect themselves from unwelcome attempts at proselytism.

I now ask myself whether it would have been for my advantage if no one had felt

bound to influence me. I had not long to wait for my answer. I have indeed tried to fashion my thought and my life as independently as possible, yet I am also aware that what has been accomplished is due to myself only in the very smallest degree. By far the greatest and best portion of my spiritual wealth has been derived from a treasure amassed during the centuries before me; part belongs to those who have exerted a personal influence upon my development; only a small part is due to myself. And so I feel myself overwhelmed with gratitude not only towards those who have directly influenced me for good, but also towards all those who in the course of the ages have contributed anything to promote religious knowledge and piety among men. I thank them that they have not in false modesty or through laziness lived for themselves, but have set to work to influence their environment in accordance with their own convictions. And even if many an error has associated itself with their

endeavours, and many a word and many an action has had a result quite different from that they intended, still their sincere purpose and their unselfish fidelity have not been lost in the great spiritual economy of human life.

And so I would play my part with vigour and cheerfulness in this mutual intercourse of spirits, not receiving only but also giving, and I would make my influence felt in the station to which God has called me. I then do only what I must, what the voice within impels me to do; the consequence of my action lies not in my hands. I do also what love demands of me, for if I am grateful to those who have had a wholesome influence upon my character, I must seek to render like service to those whom life brings into contact with me. And this I do according to my power and insight, giving myself as I am. I speak in accordance with my convictions, I act in accordance with my principles. That which lives in me and affords peace to my

soul I wish to share with others, that it may become a blessing to them also.

I impart this gift in the peculiar form in which I possess it; but I regard the form as essential only in the case of those simple souls that have been assigned to me as their spiritual teacher. With those who are more advanced in insight, it is only the means whereby I present and impart myself to them, so that I may exert upon their souls the same stimulating influence that I suffer them to exercise upon me.

6.

How easy it was once to sit in judgment upon men, and to condemn as sin what was opposed to my own thought and feeling. This has become harder for me the more I have learnt of the truth.

Not even in the sphere of morality can I bring myself to pronounce a sentence of condemnation.

I can loathe the sin and punish the sinner. But since I have looked more deeply into life, and have noticed the mysterious and tangled ways in which men's dispositions and characters are formed under influences beyond human calculation, I now find it impossible to pronounce the final sentence. I have been obliged to acquit many a man whom I at first regarded with indignation and horror, as soon as I had surveyed his history. Indeed, I have often been forced to confess with shame that my own sins, which seemed so much smaller, were in truth greater than his.

If such reserve of judgment is incumbent upon us even in the sphere of morality, how much more is this so in the sphere of religion. It is possible that a man may be good, and yet the religious principle may not have developed within him. Does it behove me to condemn him for this? It is quite possible that his fault is really the consequence of outward circumstances; do I know how far he is himself to blame? But it is also possible

that minds and wills equally religious may find the most different forms of expression; indeed in the nature of the case it must be so. Can I condemn anyone because he expresses in different fashion from me the feelings that inflame his heart? If I have come to see that all my religious ideas are only imperfect symbols of the inconceivable, I cannot be angry with one who turns to the Most High with love like mine, yet seeks to bring Him near to his soul under other symbols.

The confusion of form and essence still dominates the thought of religious people, and those who have been piously brought up have received from their childhood the impression that true piety has but one language and one form. It is therefore with them a matter of principle and a most sacred duty to hold fast to this language and form. How can I then reproach those who do not understand me, and regard my thought concerning religion as infidelity? I feel no anger towards them; I do

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not even look down upon them with feelings of indulgent pity; I pass no judgment upon the persons themselves.

Their piety indeed I judge, not however according to its form but according to its content, so far as this is known to me. For example, my concern is not with the name of the Being to whom a man prays, but only with his object in praying. The pure soul which bows before the image of the Virgin, seeing in that Saint the embodiment of the infinite holiness and love of God, and imploring from her an ever greater measure of holiness of soul and of self-denying love, has the same principle of religious life as the pious heart which craves for the like blessing from the Son of God. And both possess a higher life than I, even though I direct my gaze only towards the One God from whom all things proceed, if I have a feebler desire for holiness and love, or even make to Him some self-seeking petition.

7.

"We are saved by faith." This oft-quoted text has caused me many misgivings. It somehow repelled me, and I felt that I must discover the cause of this. I enquired into the grounds of my dislike, and fell upon two false ideas which are generally combined with that text. The word "salvation," as it is generally used, implies a divine judicial decision and a reward which is promised to man at the close of his course on earth. I cannot accept such an idea. Reward implies merit. I however have no merit in the sight of God; neither my works nor my faith establish such a claim. All is by grace alone, and this excludes reward; for a reward for faith is a contradiction in itself.

And this erroneous idea is accompanied by another which is bound up with the word "faith." It has always been the custom to understand by faith the acceptance of certain definite religious ideas. And even where it

is emphatically stated that such an acceptance is not sufficient unless accompanied by heart-felt conviction, it is still regarded as at least an essential element of faith. And so eternal salvation has been made to depend upon a condition which it is not in the power of the will to fulfil, but which rests to a very great extent, often entirely, upon mere accidents of birth, education, and such-like. I had already felt that this was an error even before I could understand the reason of my feeling.

And so my repugnance to the thought that we are saved by faith proved itself to be well grounded. And yet again it had a certain attraction for me, as though it contained an important truth. On this point too I strove to arrive at clear conceptions.

I crave for salvation, I thirst for life—for life full and serene which satisfies and brings peace to the soul. I crave for salvation; I gaze with hope and yearning upon the vision of a perfection in eternity. And so for others also

—salvation in this world and in the world to come is the highest boon that love bids me wish for them. How may we be saved? We can ask no more momentous question than this.

I hear an answer, the voice of humanity which in a thousand different tones rings in my ears and awakens a sweet echo in the depths of my own heart. It says: That most inward and most sacred longing of thy whole nature is no dream. He, by Whom and in Whom and to Whom are all things, has implanted this longing within thee that He may draw thee to Himself and reveal Himself to thee. For thou art spirit of His spirit, and wilt awake to perfect life, when, knowing Him, thou knowest thyself. He calls thee; listen to His voice! He stands before thee; open thine eyes! He stretches forth His hand to thee; clasp it!

This is the only work required of me for my salvation. I must affirm that most inward prompting of my soul; I must go out of myself that I may breathe in the full atmos-

phere of God which enfolds me; I must trust as a child in the bosom of the Father. This is faith, and if I so believe, I am saved.

Yes, indeed! faith saves me and brings me at once into the possession of my portion and inheritance now and in eternity, just as the awakening from sleep establishes us anew in the possession of our existence and all it implies. But the life of the doubter is a restless dream. He stretches forth his hand and seizes nothing; he makes haste yet moves not from his place. He makes an attempt to attain to the lofty ideal which his spirit places before him, but he soon comes to the halt again, and, as if disillusionised, he declares in sad and weary tones: It is indeed nothing; it is all illusion; only the fantastic creation of that longing in which I wear myself away to no purpose.

8.

If these considerations disposed me to the utmost leniency in my judgment of mankind,

they brought to me also most grateful peace of mind and heart. But I am obliged in all seriousness to venture the question how far such feelings of toleration fit me for the battle of life, and whether they do not cripple my power of action.

I noticed that the most bigoted and inconsiderate men produce in the world the greatest results. They judge with celerity and assurance, they apply a simple rule, and without much trouble of mind distinguish between good and evil; they lay down fixed dogmas of faith, and recognise only absolute acceptance or rejection of these; they form a sect or join a sect, and for those outside they see no hope of salvation; with the greatest bitterness they contend with those that differ from them, those that are like-minded they draw to themselves with a mighty attraction; they are strong in love and hate. These are the men of action that carry through their purpose and attain to results, and, if their purpose is good, become benefactors of humanity. They arouse the soul

and impel it to make a decision; they convict the conscience and excite the passions both good and evil; they threaten and promise, create fear and hope, and set even the most slothful in motion. He who is righteous and therefore careful in his judgment, he who recognises human limitations and therefore is humble—he must retreat before these men of reckless determination. His qualities stand in the way of the decision which is necessary for action, and lift him so high above the world stormed-tossed with passions, that he loses his influence upon it.

Here I stand before a very difficult problem. One must come to terms with facts. As a matter of fact, men are more influenced by feeling and impulse than by judgment. The former are given by nature itself, the latter is the work of an independent and developed spirit. Men who are developed are alone capable of judgment, and of these there are not many. The undeveloped, on the other hand, must be led and educated. They

cannot be expected to produce, by their own independent effort, a moral and religious life in themselves or to choose between different modes of expression of the same. They must be provided with conceptions that are exactly expressed and with ordinances of a distinct and fixed character, if they are to partake of the spirit these enshrine. The ethical ideal must be brought near to them in the form of commandments, their relation to God must be impressed upon them by means of history and doctrine.

They require some authoritative influence which compels them to do good and to believe in God. Such an influence can only be exercised by some strong personality, or by an established society, which declares, as with divine authority: "This you must believe, this you must do." All spiritual development begins, as indeed my own began, with subjection to such an authority, and with the majority of men it does not pass beyond this stage.

All education depends upon this principle,

whether it be the education of children or of adults. It exerts its first and strongest influence upon the will by means of the feelings, only in the second place through knowledge. It calls to its aid the powers of attraction and fear, it awakens the feelings of desire and abhorrence, it now encourages and again punishes, it now rewards with a friendly look and again reproves with anger. By these means it directs the will towards goodness and the source of all goodness, that it may create a firm character and inspire a strong affection; for only when these are acquired does the spirit become free and capable of moral and religious judgment.

And so when I have to teach or to act as an officer of a teaching Church I am not concerned with investigation, I must adopt a firm standpoint and thence produce results. When I observe faults and errors I ought not to occupy myself with tracing these back to their causes in order to satisfy my sense of justice, I must work for their removal; and this can-

not be done without fighting. But he that would fight without hurting anyone will effect nothing. I ought not to institute investigations into different modes of expression that I may obtain the clearness of conception which I desire, but by my teaching I ought to influence souls and form characters. Therefore the teaching must be firm and positive, not tentative but directed straight to the mark, else will it die away without accomplishing anything.

This is the reason why bigoted men generally produce a greater impression than those who are tolerant. And I was now compelled to give earnest consideration to the question how far I might with good conscience accommodate myself to these demands of life.

9.

If a child who has been spoiled by neglect is to be brought to better ways, and if this most necessary reform can only be accom-

plished through severe punishment, ought I to spend time in investigating whose fault it is that the poor little one has acquired such bad habits? Love itself answers: No! And the loving friend, without scruple, perhaps with bleeding heart, will employ every expedient that offers a hope of attaining to the good end he has in view. He will do the same if the spoiled children are grown-up people. He may act unjustly, and yet his action is right. For love is the highest justice.

If a tender soul is to be guarded from the attack of the tempter, am I to ask first whether the enemy deserves a gentle or a stern judgment? No! with my sharpest weapons I must fall upon him and put him to flight. All holding back were treachery. And so love to my people demands of me that I attack with regardless severity those who injure them. These men may in themselves be excusable, and yet I may not spare them. I would not pronounce the final sentence against any one, none would I malign; but in

warfare for the people's good I must wield my sword and endeavour to cripple the adversary, even though I feel more sympathy for him than hatred.

If I see that some great question can only be decided by the strife of parties, and that the individual works in vain so long as he takes neither one side nor the other, am I to spend my strength to no purpose, or to look on in idleness, because I wish to hold aloof from the conflict? If I acted thus, I should be obliged to accuse myself of unfaithfulness to my calling. I know well that in the strife of parties much is done that is wrong, but to do nothing is also wrong. It is so delightful to keep one's hands folded and to reflect how pure they are from the filth of the world. But where is love to be found in such behaviour, love which must work while it is yet day?

Of course, if my party sins I must not sin with it. I must cherish no personal hatred when I fight for the cause. I must not condemn or impute low motives to my opponent

when I oppose his endeavours. I must not insinuate suspicion, nor must I slander; it is quite possible for my weapons to be keen and yet honourable.

I must not lie and call evil good when my comrades do so. I can always resolutely set truth above party, and I shall thereby never injure the good cause, but only render it welcome service.

And so the conflict is not only justifiable, but even my duty, if Love demands it of me. If my conscience assures me that I am free from self-interested motives and impure passions, and that my intention is honest and upright, I may go with confidence into the battle. For the purity of my intention will of itself preserve me from fighting unfairly or unworthily.

10.

I shall accomplish nothing unless I definitely proclaim the truth of my convictions and contend with all determination for what I hold to

be good and true. What right have I to do this? Am I not human and liable to error?

Many feel confidence in themselves and their views if they see many standing on their own side. I have experienced this feeling myself; I know how inspiring it is to be carried away by some great spiritual movement. And yet often enough truth has been found to be with the minority.

For many men it is enough to know that they are in harmony with the tradition of the days of old. This enthusiastic feeling also is known to me; but how many traditions have already been cast into shadow by the advance of knowledge.

Others take their stand on the fact that they are in the service of a firmly-established human society. Such an ordered society is indeed necessary, and the consciousness that one has one's calling from it strengthens one's position. But has not every new truth been compelled to force its way to recognition in conflict with established order?

And so it seems that here one can never find firm foothold. In fact, I find no authority outside me, upon which I can establish my conviction. I should first be compelled to decide for one or other of such authorities. But how can I do this if I have not already a conviction in accordance with which I give my vote? When I was under instruction I submitted myself to the authority in whose sphere of influence chance had placed me. But now that it is my duty to exercise free judgment I must place myself above chance, at least as far as I can.

And so nothing remains but that I stand upon my own feet and believe and act according to my own conviction. But I am in no worse case than any other man who is certain of his position; in maintaining my own conviction, I have the same justification and equal obligation, and both justification and obligation are in accordance with the degree of certainty which I feel.

It is therefore my duty to submit myself to

thorough examination. If I am still uncertain, if I am not clear in my own mind, if the conviction of the truth of my views has not as yet saturated my soul so completely that it influences my whole life and colours every action, then I must refrain and seek first to become mature in myself. If however I have a real conviction, a firm inward certainty, that my principles are true and wholesome and that what is opposed to them is pernicious, then I am bound to call all my powers into action, and to shrink from no conflict in promoting my views.

That this applies, so far as religion is concerned, only to principles of faith and conduct, not to mere religious views, follows from the nature of religious knowledge. It is true that religious views are not unimportant in so far as they impart the life principle of piety and can do this the better the nearer they approach to the truth itself. And so one cannot avoid a certain conflict concerning these also. But it is a different and far less important conflict

than that for principles. Only in the case of those whom it is my duty to instruct ought I to insist upon the acceptance of my views; with the educated I must discuss them, and come to an understanding as to their approximate correctness. Principles, on the contrary, must approve themselves in life, and those which we have found to stand this test we must simply endeavour to promote among all men.

11.

My soul has come to birth and has developed in society, to society I feel myself indebted with all my powers. That as a member I serve the body makes up for me the worth of existence; in communion with the body in receiving and giving I find satisfaction and encouragement and an inexhaustible source of strength. As a member of a body I am rooted in the past, and work for the future. Thus I live a healthy spiritual life.

Therefore I would devote myself to society;

I would not stand aloof from the aspirations and endeavours of my contemporaries; I would feel with my people and share in their conflicts. I would maintain the relationship in which I find myself placed by nature; I would seek new ones when my soul requires fresh nourishment and enlarged spheres of work.

The spirit of religion has its source in society. No man is pious through himself alone, only few can preserve their piety in isolation. It is where many are gathered together that the sacred fire blazes forth; it is where brethren are united in enthusiastic communion that the wings of the soul develope; it is by mutual co-operation that the acquisitions of the centuries are handed down from generation to generation.

But what is it that establishes and holds together a religious community? If religion is life, then a religious society, if it really deserves this name, can only come into being and continue by means of a life, a soul of which it is itself the body, by means of

principles of faith and conduct which come to expression within it. If this soul disappears, the society may still abide for a time like a lifeless corpse, but it surely comes at last to dissolution. As in the individual, so also in the community, it is the spirit that giveth life.

Now even my own spirit can only realise its relation to God by means of ideas. How can it be otherwise in the case of a community? How can the religious spirit dispense with ideas if it certainly must clothe itself in words, in order to pass from one man to another? No indeed! if I had been ever in danger of slighting religious ideas, their import for the life of the community must have taught me a better lesson. And in this case it is by no means enough that such ideas should simply exist in the community; they must also possess a certain agreement in their form. For their object is to awaken similar feelings, to produce and preserve a similar life. In this case there ought to be one word for all, and all who hear it should feel the breath of the one spirit.

For the sake of the community I shall be obliged, to a certain extent, to connect my religious feeling with the ideas, and to express it in the words, which are prevalent among my brethren. And although I recognise the imperfection inherent in these, and although my own ideas and modes of expression of the same truths are often of a different character, yet in many cases I cannot divest myself of them, not only because I would not deprive myself of the power of influencing others, but also because of my own need.

I am not so constituted that I can dispense with the fellowship of others. My faith and love would soon wither away if in our common worship they were not refreshed by the dew of Heaven. And if I received nothing from the inexhaustible fount of the common spirit, my power of giving would soon come to an end. I would not set myself above the rest and in proud independence live a life of starvation. I would live among the people as a living member of my Church; in the community I

would seek my own edification, that I may also contribute my share to the edification of the community. I would kneel side by side with the least of my brethren in the presence of the Father and kiss the hem of His garment, knowing well that with all my higher thought I am no nearer to Him than the child who with loving heart lisps His name.

12.

How far can one and may one employ faulty religious conceptions for the sake of communion, and in order to preserve historical continuity? I have heard, and at different periods of my life have given to myself, such different answers to this question, that I cannot bring myself to draw up a rule that should be universally valid. Yet I have formed for myself some principles by which I guide my own conduct in this matter.

I can pray with children in childish fashion, and am edified when with them I speak to

God as I should not speak to Him were I alone. If I were to pray thus with grown-up people, it would seem to me unreal and would hinder my devotion.

Similarly I can speak with God in the congregation otherwise than in my chamber, and feel myself uplifted if I believe that I have heard the common consciousness rightly expressed in the prayer. Were I compelled to admit that formulæ were used which were not understood, or had in the course of general spiritual development become antiquated, I should have again the same feeling of unreality, and I could not from my heart take part in the prayer. And so I infer that the act of worship in which I take part must in itself be genuine.

But it must also be genuine for me. If it is only an imperfect expression of the feelings which move my heart, it cannot disturb me. I can read into it the meaning which I intend. But if it stands in opposition to my religious feeling, if it gives expression to desires which

seem to me immoral or impious, if the ideas which lie behind it cannot find an echo in my soul, then I can have no part in it. I cannot share in the prayer if I account the thing wrong for which the petition is made; I cannot join in speaking when things are said of God which are unworthy or wicked; I cannot acquiesce in the invocation of a being who is quite indifferent to me or even violates the best feelings of my heart.

When traditions which can only be human are accounted divine revelation, and as such form the principles upon which the public teaching of a church is based; if these traditions enshrine a lofty ethical or religious truth, I am not satisfied with adopting an attitude of toleration towards them, but together with the whole community I open my heart to them. For every truth is in very deed a word of God, even if it be expressed by men. But I cannot tolerate that anything human, whether it be a person, or an institution, or a book, or

a doctrine, be declared to be divine in a fashion which is contrary to the truth.

And this happens when such teaching is employed to hinder the endeavour after truth. To the indifferent and to the scoffers it must be said: "This is the word of God which you should obey." To the weak and fearful the truth which is recognised by the community brings the strength and comfort of God. Those who of their own will agree with it, rejoice that God has revealed it to them.

But the way to higher stages of life and knowledge should never be obstructed, and the sacred impulse which unceasingly strives upward should never be checked. If this be done, things will come to that wretched pass of which history affords so many warning examples, where a fatal discrepancy between more advanced insight and established doctrine blunts the public conscience and works equal injury to sincerity and piety. Therefore I will never take part in efforts by which the com-

munity cuts off from itself the possibility of a healthy development.

But, thus refraining, do I fulfil my whole duty? Must I not take my own active share in promoting progress?

Seeing that I recognise that progress is in accordance with the will of God, I must feel bound to take part in forwarding it. This duty, however, depends upon the measure of my power. No one can reproach a man who has been called to be a reformer because he marches along his path in obedience to the inward voice, and without regard to the scandal caused to the weaker brethren. But we smaller men are bound to have regard for the weak. We have to examine carefully whether in a particular case we are justified in destroying sanctuaries that exist, and we must deny that we have any right to such action if we cannot build something better in their place. Besides, it is well to remember that pulling down is easier than building up. Again, it is not enough that we are ourselves

convinced of the goodness of that which it is in our power to offer. We must try to make sure that it is better than the old for those to whom we offer it. For if we judge of men by ourselves we easily deceive ourselves.

Therefore it is commendable, wherever possible, to give before one takes away. If I find in the religious thought of a man errors which I cannot but wish to remove, I shall best attain my object without injury to himself, if by my words, and still better by my actions, I so place the truth before his eyes that it convinces him. Then the error will fall away of itself. So, in general, it is of small profit to confine oneself to combating false opinions. Let a man affirm in place of denial; let the light of truth shine forth that it may of itself disperse the mists of error.

But the truth is that which is simple, that which is ingrained in the nature of men, that which is the essential in religion, namely, pure, spiritual, childlike piety; and it is high time that this were recognised in its unique sub-

limity and its surpassing worth. Much that is perplexing, much unnecessary and harmful quarrelling, much hypocrisy, infidelity and indifference would have an end if all the powers of religious fervour which exist among us were directed to their true goal and did not dissipate themselves in a profitless conflict concerning what is unessential and worthless.

VI

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SECTS

1.

I HAVE been educated in Christianity, and from childhood have learnt to regard "Christian" and "true" as synonymous terms. When however I found that there were in the world many other religions and creeds, of a different character from Christianity, which were sincerely accepted by men, I felt bound to institute a thorough investigation into its claim to truth. For there was no reason to believe that a doctrine was necessarily true simply because I had been brought up in it.

Many men are not indeed in the position to make such an enquiry. It is for them to seek to approve themselves faithful in the religion

to which they have been called by their birth. But he who is able to decide for himself is bound to do so, and would be dishonest did he refrain. And so I have not the choice whether I would investigate or no. I must do it to the best of the ability that God has granted me. I must render to myself a complete and exact account of my religion, and may not allow myself to be influenced consciously by any prejudice either for or against.

2.

If I investigate the morality which is taught by the Christianity of the New Testament, I am first of all struck by its inwardness. It is not enough that ethical ordinances are placed far above religious usages, and that the moral worth of the latter is denied in so far as they are something external, but even the moral law itself is most clearly and definitely extended to the character as the root of all action and the standard by which its worth is

gauged. Thus sincerity and truth are fundamental characteristics of Christian morality.

But what is the character which is demanded? It is spoken of as a complete renewal of heart, a death of the old man and a resurrection of the new, a definite renunciation of all that is evil and an unbounded love of the good. The absolute importance of moral endeavour is thus insisted upon. The complete victory of the spirit over the flesh is set before men as their goal. With the most inflexible determination Christianity advances as her claim that which is the real essence of morality—inward freedom, the government of the unruly desires by a personality complete in itself, the transformation of the natural man into a fitting instrument of the spirit. She demands absolute and true spirituality.

But this spirituality does not consist in an unfruitful preoccupation with one's own soul. Christianity is the perfection of love. For Christianity the conquest of the natural man by the spirit means really the uprooting of selfish-

ness, a complete self-surrender for the good of the whole as well as of the individual, delight in imparting blessing and offering service, and the most heartfelt pity which is ever prepared to submit to the bitterest sacrifice with cheerful countenance and without reckoning up its good deeds. Thus with all its inwardness Christian morality does not shut itself up within itself, but ever declares itself in strenuous unwearying action—action which waits not for the opportunity to be given, but seeks it unceasingly—action even there where endurance only is possible. For Christian endurance is not a spirit of despondent slothful submission to the inevitable, but of heroic conflict —conflict which never ceases even when action is impossible and only the cross can help forward the victory of the truth that brings freedom and salvation to the world.

In very truth I can find no morality purer than that of Christianity. Nor, again, do I know of a religion that is purer.

In this religion man stands to God in a two-

fold relationship of the lowliest submission and the most heartfelt communion. God is exalted above us in such absolute sublimity and holiness that we must renounce all claim to be anything or to deserve anything in His sight. We are all sinners and have deserved wrath. But God is love. He proffers us grace that we may be saved. We should believe in Him, and in loving trust throw ourselves into His arms. We should disclaim all self-righteousness and live by His grace. We should surrender all self-will and unite ourselves completely with Him. Then He is our Father and we are His children. We have joyful confidence in Him; in full trust we cast upon Him all that burdens our hearts; we await our full salvation from His love, which stands fast like an everlasting rock in the raging sea of time.

But if we are children of God, there is an open way between us and Him. No man, no human ordinance can come between us; all priestly mediation has come to an end. Each

Christian is a priest unto God. Because he resigns all claim to be anything in himself, he is raised to a height which far transcends all earthly glory. Each individual soul gains infinite worth, the child of God cannot but be the heir of God, his way cannot trend downwards to annihilation, but must lead upwards to perfection. The certainty of eternal life follows of itself, the Spirit of God, of Whose pervading presence and influence in the soul the believer is conscious, is the pledge thereof.

Here I perceive a manifestation of the spirit of religion in the most perfect form that I know. And accordingly I regard Christianity as combining the purest morality with the purest religion. Here apparent discords unite to form the sweetest harmony. By grace we are saved, by grace alone without any merit of our own—and yet love developes unceasingly moral activity of the highest order. All is of God, all is His work, nothing can hinder Him in the accomplishment of His purpose—and yet thou must work while it is

day, thou must set on with all thy power as if the achievement lay entirely with thyself. The deepest humility in the presence of the Most High and the tenderest gentleness towards mankind is bound up inwardly with the utmost inflexibility of purpose in the performance of duty and in the conflict with evil.

I stand in admiration before so perfect a revelation of the life of the spirit in humanity, and I count myself blessed in that I have my portion in the same.

3.

Christianity is a historical religion, no mere edifice of human thought. In this lies its strength, but therein is to be found the cause of manifold errors which have sprung from it.

Christianity is entirely the creation and revelation of a personality. Jesus appeared with a doctrine which, free as it was from all the dust of the schools, was the living expression of a soul unique in moral and religious

power. And this doctrine so fully solved all the great problems of the human heart that it appeared to the souls which received it as the sun rising in his strength. His whole character was in correspondence with His teaching. Men saw in Him an all-conquering greatness of soul, a confidence of faith exalted far above all doubt, a serene unconstrained security in His relations to God, for He was conscious that His soul was in perfect harmony with the Divine Will, a triumphant assurance of His divine mission, an energy of fire and an inflexible assurance of purpose combined with restful clearness of vision and heavenly tenderness, a love which surrendered itself even to the humblest and stretched forth its hands to save the lost, a deep compassion for all the bodily and spiritual sufferings of men.

This was no ordinary man. Under the enchantment of His personality the Heavens were opened before the eyes of those who submitted themselves to His attraction. They felt the nearness of God, Who revealed

Himself in Him and promised them grace and peace. They learned to call the Almighty their Father, and they were brought into the same fellowship with Him as that in which their Master Himself stood. A new life began for them, a spirit of confidence and joy overmastered them—a spirit which freed them from fear and slavish service and made them willing and strong to fulfil the high and pure commands of their Lord. This influence of the personality of Jesus upon His disciples was so powerful that His death could not destroy it; on the contrary, it continually increased to overwhelming might. They clung firmly to the picture engraven in their hearts, so full of divine grace and truth; they saw in Him the glorified one set at the right hand of God; they preserved with Him a spiritual fellowship far more real than that of the days of His bodily presence with them; they found courage to bear joyful witness to Him and to His salvation in a hostile world, and amid all its persecutions they became only more assured in their faith.

From this small band grew the Christian Church. Christianity became a world religion. The person of Jesus remained the centre of vitality; the union of the divine and the human which His disciples had seen in Him lived on as the supreme mystery of revealed truth. The proclamation of the great facts that God loved the world, that He had sent His own Son into it and through Him had established a new covenant of everlasting reconciliation, was passed on from generation to generation as the priceless treasure of humanity.

In this lay the strength of this religion. It enshrined the living personality of one in whom the divine and human were reconciled. It declared the unceasing operation of that same transcendent moral and religious force which had once been manifested to the world in an actual personal life. The truth which is revealed in Christianity does not appear in the form of thoughts, but of facts. And so it still shines forth in the freshness of youth

which is ever renewed; it lives before the eyes of the believer; he can see it.

But this circumstance has, it must be confessed, given rise to errors of many kinds. As the new religion proceeded on its victorious career, the idea of the personality of Jesus became exalted far above the measure of what He really was and had declared Himself to be. He that was the way became now the goal; He that was the mediator with the Most High became the Highest Himself. The term Son of God was transformed from its metaphorical to its literal sense, and the idea of a nature like unto God's was found to be no longer inconceivable. Indeed the Son, who had become incarnate and had died for the world, had greater attraction for the hearts of men and called forth in them more ardent love and devotion than the Father in His majesty so remote and inapproachable. These feelings were interpreted and expressed in the form of a fixed and definite doctrine by men whose minds had been trained in the schools of Jewish

and Greek philosophy. The Divinity of Christ, with the other doctrines that were its logical conclusion, became established as a dogma. And if it was felt that this dogma was incompatible with the humanity of Christ and with the belief in the Unity of God, the objection was refuted by the assertion that the doctrinal formula, though it was constructed according to the laws of the understanding, must contradict the understanding, seeing that it expressed a mystery of faith.

In similar fashion the historical facts took upon themselves a mysterious supernatural character. The reconciliation of man with God became a propitiation of God Himself. The death of Christ, of such decisive import in history, was transformed into an action which changed the attitude of God to the world.

It is true that these changes were brought about by a law of inner necessity; but it does not follow that the resulting conceptions are forever incontestable. History teaches us of

many ideas which were a necessity to the thought of their times, which have nevertheless proved to be only steps upon the ladder of knowledge. These later days may call just as urgently for another judgment, and sincerity demands of us that we give and express this judgment regardless of consequences.

A violent conflict of opinions is again in progress concerning Christ and His work of redemption. Which side am I to take therein?

I can do nothing against the truth. The truth, which speaks to me in the words and in the spirit of Jesus, overpowers my heart. I cannot but love this unique child of God with all the fervour of my soul, I cannot but lift up eyes full of reverence and rapture to this Personality in Whom the highest and most sacred virtues which can move the heart of man shine forth in spotless purity throughout the ages. Even if many a trait in His portrait, as the Gospels sketch it for us, be more legendary than historical, yet I feel that

here a man stands before me, a man who really lived and has a place in history like that of no other man; indeed I feel that even the legends concerning Him possess a truth in that they spring from the spirit which passed from Him into His Church. I know what I have to thank Him for. I would in my inward self be so closely united with Him that He may live in my spirit and bear absolute sway in my soul. I will not be ashamed of His cross, and I will gladly endure the insults which men have directed and still often enough direct against Him and His truth.

But though I love and reverence Him ever so deeply, I can never regard Him as God Himself. The feeling of love and devotion which I experience when my soul raises itself to God is so unique that it is absolutely indivisible. It is simply impossible for me to set side by side with the One who is all in all any being of whom I could think and feel as I do of God, to whom I could speak, to whom

I could submit myself so unreservedly as I do to God. Others may be able to do this—and I do not wish to accuse them of insincerity—but I cannot. To do so would be for me a lie, a perversion of the innermost principle of my religion.

Nor can I so regard the atonement which Jesus has effected as if He by some action of His had influenced God or had gained for us a title to the divine favour. My faith cannot endure the thought that God can be influenced or that any creature can have a claim upon Him. I need redemption and reconciliation, and I find them as I seek them in Christianity. But the idea of a God that has been propitiated from without is one that I cannot realise.

And so I am compelled to reject the doctrine of the Church concerning the Godhead and the merits of Christ, and in doing so I know that I am in the fullest agreement with Christ Himself.

4.

Christianity, like every other great movement among mankind, was connected with and has carried forward an earlier stage of development. Jesus was in the first place the prophet of His own people, and declared His intention to fulfil their most sacred hopes. These hopes were combined in the conception of the kingdom of God. This grand conception of a future consummation of all things which kept the minds of men in a state of intense expectancy was derived from the belief that a divine scheme of salvation was fulfilling itself in the history of the world. Still grander was the content which Jesus gave to this conception. He used it as a mould into which He poured the absolute fulness of the moral and religious spirit which inspired Himself, and then proclaimed that the kingdom of God had come. The reconciliation between God and man, that treasure of His own soul which He undertook to impart to the world, was for Him the promised kingdom of

Heaven, the fulfilment of all prophecy, the consummation of the history of His people and of the divine purpose immanent therein.

But the Old Testament prophets had already regarded the history of Israel as the heart-throb of human history. Even they had seen in the future kingdom of God a salvation for the whole human race. Still more completely must the spirit of Jesus have shaken itself free from national limitations and have taken the world for its object; for the reconciliation of the soul with God, as He conceived it, is concerned with man as man, and is absolutely independent of all superficial distinctions. And so Christianity as the consummation of all things, as the kingdom of God come among men, claimed to satisfy every yearning of the human soul and to bring complete salvation to the world.

This blessing was at first inward only, and in the outward life a tremendous conflict broke out and brought untold sufferings to the Christians. Yet in the strength of an over-

powering enthusiasm they rose superior to all opposition, and in the conviction that they were fulfilling the will of God they looked for the approaching victory of the kingdom of God over all hostile powers—the glorious transfiguration of the world soon to be accomplished in the second coming of Christ. This expectation produced in them an energy and power of resistance intense in the highest degree. The faithful felt themselves the pioneers of a kingdom before which the old world would shortly break in pieces and yield place to a new order of things. They were assured that by spreading the Gospel they helped to hasten the fulfilment of the plan of salvation which underlay the whole course of the divine government of the world.

This idea of the future, which as the expectation of the near coming of the Lord formed the impelling force of the Christian movement in the first ages, has naturally taken another shape in the later Church. But Christianity is still the religion of a hope that

looks for perfection in the future, and seeks in eternity the goal of the present life.

There was a hidden danger in this forceful direction of the energies of the soul towards a goal in the future. The present world, which was thought to be so near its end, could have no importance in itself; efforts which had as their aim the development and furtherance of the life of the state or of worldly civilisation and welfare, could not but appear worthless if all things temporal were quickly approaching annihilation. Here was the rock upon which Christianity, in its power of influencing the world's history, might well have made shipwreck.

But so far from this having happened, Christianity has brought about a new birth in the world in other relations besides the religious. It is the strongest proof of the lofty perfection of the ethical spirit which proceeded from Jesus, that primitive Christianity with all its future expectations did not degenerate into a religion of baseless visionary

enthusiasm, but became the salt of the earth exerting its purifying influence in every sphere of life. So great was the power and the universal influence of the spirit of self-denying love and of submission to every ordinance of God, that these Christians, who stood as it were with only one foot in the world, displayed the warmest sympathy with every form of human distress, the most fervent zeal for the improvement of all relations and conditions of society, and the most conscientious fidelity in the fulfilment of all the duties of citizenship. Thus it came about that Christianity, though despising the world, was by its ethical spirit preserved from stumbling on earth as it looked up to Heaven.

Nevertheless, the primitive Christian conception of the relationship of Heaven to earth was by no means clear, and it was necessarily modified as the expectation of the approach of the last day was not fulfilled, and as Christianity entered upon the task of leavening with its spirit the world as it then

was and throughout its future history. Then arose two tendencies, which in the Catholic Church have run their own separate course side by side, and even in the reformed Churches are not yet reconciled though brought much closer to one another. The men of the one tendency had their eyes turned to the world, they saw in the Church and its sacramental offices only a means for warding off the punishments temporal and eternal which they incurred by their worldly disposition. Those of the other tendency were enthusiastic devotees, whose eyes looked only towards Heaven, who regarded the world as an antagonist which must be overcome in a self-centred religious life of separation from all social duties.

When I endeavour to distinguish rightly between what is true and what is false in these questions, I come to the following conclusion. Religion, when it has reached the level of Christianity, must be essentially a religion of hope. The human spirit can never halt in its

development at the boundaries of the earthly life. Where a man feels himself united with God in the sense which the Christian atonement implies, time for him must be linked with eternity. The children of the Eternal cannot regard themselves as the waves of a troubled sea. As they believe in God, so must they also believe in themselves and in their immortality. And they cannot but be convinced that in the same measure that they attain to the character of a man of God, so they are working for eternity; and this consciousness must lend to all their thoughts and actions an elevated enthusiasm and resolution of purpose.

But for all this, the earthly life must maintain its full independence. Humanity as such belongs entirely to the earth, and the goal of its development lies within the bounds of earth. Each good man performs his part in forwarding the kingdom of God among men, but humanity will still abide human. I am human, and in all that is human I must recognise the divine law

which I have neither made nor may criticise, to which on the contrary I must submit. All really human endeavour, whether it be called earthly or spiritual, stands alike in the service of God, and as such has its worth. The development of all the powers of mankind, all activities which are necessary for social life, for man's rule over the earth, for his bodily and spiritual wellbeing, have their full and proper significance in the divine economy, and it does not behove us to despise them as worthless and vain.

In humanity immortal souls are developed. I raise my eyes to Heaven and rejoice that I am a child of the Eternal Father. But it is not my business to dissipate the force of my soul in day dreams concerning the future life. I am a man upon earth, and so long as this is so, I have my duty here. I do not so distinguish between time and eternity as if the latter alone were real and the first an empty shadow. If it is possible for me to live upon earth in accordance with the will of God, then

this life is something very real, is indeed of high worth, and its duties have their own proper significance. My life is given me not simply for the sake of Heaven; for the present I am to live in the kingdom of God upon earth, and so none of my actions are governed solely by the thought of Heaven, but so long as I belong to earth, I wish to serve God here with all my heart and in all joyfulness, satisfied and thankful that I may do so.

The kingdom of God upon earth is nothing else than the moral and religious life of men. As this life developes rightly and in accordance with its own nature, so the Spirit of God becomes the power which rules the world. When once this thought is realised, character, as it is revealed in moral action, becomes the standard of human worth. In this sense Jesus spoke of the children and the kingdom of God. But as Christianity created one community after another which established certain doctrines and forms as their watchwords, these conditions were at first taught to be equivalent with and

afterwards to be more important than moral action as signs of membership of the kingdom of God. Those who agreed with these doctrines and accepted these forms called themselves the faithful, and as such accounted themselves the chosen of God ordained to eternal life; while according to their view the mass of the unbelievers were foredoomed to condemnation. For so prone is man to presumption, that even the deepest humility before God becomes converted into spiritual pride, that the renunciation of all confidence in worldly wisdom goes hand in hand with the conceit of a deeper insight into divine mysteries, that the man who implores the divine grace which excludes all human merit is led to assume that he is before all others elect and well-pleasing to the Most High.

It is evident that this is an error into which historical religions very easily fall. It is the more incumbent upon those who perceive the error to oppose it. For it is the cause of those countless vexatious religious quarrels that are

such a hindrance to the knowledge of the truth, and are so pernicious to morality and religion. How much impertinent inquisitiveness is displayed in men's dealings with the mysteries of the future world! How lightly men occupy themselves with conceptions of whose full significance they have no imagination! They play with the conceptions of Heaven and Hell like children playing at kings. They set themselves upon the throne of the Supreme Judge and separate the saved from the lost. Every condition of just judgment is wanting; they neither know men's hearts nor consider their acts; they are not in the position to say how far men are responsible for their beliefs and their lives, and yet they claim adhesion to a creed and acceptance of outward forms, and where their requirements are not satisfied with light heart they deliver the sentence:—condemned and lost eternally. If the conception of eternity is so misused, it were better not to have it at all.

5.

Christianity at its appearance advanced a claim to be the highest form of divine revelation. The conception of revelation is primitive and is essential to every historical religion. Jesus found it current among His people, who regarded the history of the nation of Israel as the fulfilment of a divine plan, and the Holy Scriptures as inspired by God. He connected Himself with what had gone before, and felt Himself called to complete what had been begun. Therefore He accepted the earlier revelation, and appealed to its authority, but He likewise claimed for Himself the recognition of His own divine mission.

Who would deny that He was justified in this? He preached no artificially-devised doctrine. He spoke forth what had been revealed to Him as the result of a unique religious life in the most intimate communion with the Father, what He recognised as the need of His people and the goal of God's ways

hitherto. He not only gave utterance to the revelation, but devoted His life to its realisation in the world, that He might establish upon earth the kingdom of God.

To the religious man God is not merely an idea, but the living and life-giving spirit. He hears the divine voice within him, he speaks with God as with one present, he feels His power in his soul, and he acts as His instrument. Belief in a divine revelation is thus quite inseparable from religion. If however Jesus affirmed of Himself that He had received a special revelation, no one who recognises the uniqueness of His personality can contradict Him. And it is only natural that Christianity has always seen in Him the one soul through whom God speaks most clearly to men.

But upon what is this belief based? If it is truth, it can rest only upon free agreement—upon the impression which I receive from the word and the spirit of Jesus. It is true that from childhood I have been taught that the Gospel of Jesus is the Word of God. But

if it is demanded that for this reason I should believe in the Gospel, then it follows that every one during his whole life must hold fast to the truth of that which he has learned from his childhood. Such a thought is absurd.

And yet the demand is made. It is asserted that I am bound without questioning to accept as the word of God every word which Jesus is recorded to have spoken, although He Himself has written nothing, and accordingly it is not even certain how far I really have His words before me. It follows that I must in the first place believe in the infallibility of the Evangelists, and therefore I must resort to the doubtful expedient of explaining away the discrepancies which, as a matter of fact, I notice in that which they record as the word of Jesus. Further, it is required of me that I regard as God's word the works of all the Biblical Authors. This would mean that I must believe in the infallibility of those who have collected the

books of the Bible. The Catholic Church is only logical when it declares the infallibility of the Church and bases the whole faith on this doctrine.

We find here an untruth which again leads to many other untruths, to artificial explanations of texts of Scripture and forced interpretations which distort the plain simple significance of passages. I cannot stoop to such things, for by untruth God is not honoured nor is man saved.

It is said indeed: "We must have something fixed, else to what shall we hold fast?" But what is it that really makes a word abidingly true for man? Is it not the inward truth of the word itself? Or it is asserted that God must have given us something that is sure, since it cannot be His will that we should be left in uncertainty. But what right have we to claim what has been and is still denied to so many millions of mankind?

There is in the Bible so much heavenly light and divine truth that we need not fear

any loss if we criticise it like any other book and allow our conscience to decide how much of its human message is the Word of God. That which is transitory will no longer stand in the way of that which is permanent; we shall no longer waste the best of our powers on that which is unessential, but we shall perceive more clearly and more fully the inspiration of the Spirit. No man is infallible. We must again realise this simple truth. Then only will agreement be possible concerning that which God has revealed and still reveals to all good and pious men.

6.

The demand that we recognise the Bible as the Word of God includes another demand that we believe the miracles that are recorded therein.

If I cannot accept the former, it follows that I cannot be logically compelled to accept the latter. Even if I grant the possibility of

miracles, the question still remains open whether these happened just in the way they are recorded. In order to settle this point we must proceed to an impartial investigation and comparison of the records, and this by no means leads to the certainty which is necessary for faith. For to believe in anything means to be certain of it, not merely to regard it as possible.

But we commit an error which is absolutely fatal if we confuse faith in so-called miracles with faith in the religious sense of the word, or if we even bring them into connection with one another. Woe to me if I base my relationship with God upon isolated events of history, and these too of such a kind that their trustworthiness requires investigation!

Take for example the miracle upon which, in the opinion of many, the whole Christian faith depends—the Resurrection of Jesus. No one has as yet succeeded in harmonising the discrepancies in the accounts of this event, or in

giving a clear convincing description of its circumstances. Although it may be certain that the disciples were convinced that they had seen their Risen Lord, and that the future development of Christianity proceeded from this conviction, still one finds no firm ground for one's feet as soon as one attempts to realise how they saw Him, and what can be the nature of a body which both is and at the same time is not flesh and bones. All our ideas on this point are like mists which fade away as soon as we approach them.

Of what service to me is the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus? I am assured that He lives in the full perfection of personality because I believe in the eternal life of the children of God. I should feel myself most unhappily placed were I compelled to regard as the chief authority for this belief a definite conception of a miracle whose nature it is difficult to realise, whose records are full of discrepancies. Again, quite apart from my attitude towards the story of the resurrection,

I know that Jesus still lives among us by the power of His spirit. In this sense He is the Living One by a testimony that cannot be impeached. Or is it that the resurrection of Jesus makes me certain of my atonement with God? This atonement is an incident of the inward life, and has come to pass so soon as I in the spirit of Jesus believe in God. But this belief has its authority in itself and is established upon a firmer foundation than any miracle can afford.

And so the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus was of tremendous import in the past history of Christianity, but at the present time it is as insignificant as the belief in His visible Advent. I must lay hold upon a loftier faith than this if I would keep my Easter with joy and thankfulness.

I do not deny that some peculiarly impressive event took place which is reflected in the records of the resurrection of Jesus; but I confess that I do not know what it was, and I am consoled for my ignorance by the fact that

my faith as a Christain does not depend upon such knowledge.

It is the same with the miracles Jesus is reported to have wrought. I do not dispute that the records, in spite of all doubt as to their trustworthiness, are based upon facts. The Gospels are not the only records which report cures by means of faith, and even in these days such cures occupy so important a place in popular life and popular thought, that I could not deny the fact of their occurrence without the closest enquiry. Probably we may recognise here the result of natural laws—and this implies an abiding will of God—which have hitherto been too little investigated. But this is the very thing which shows that neither the belief which produces these so-called miracles nor the belief in their occurrence stands in necessary connection with faith in the Christian or even in the religious sense of the word. Besides Scripture itself declares that even false prophets will work great wonders. Jesus is just the same for my religious life whether He

healed sick folk or no. But if He did heal sick folk, I derive no benefit therefrom; for disease still rules in the world even though among the myriads of diseased mankind some individuals were once, or perhaps here and there are still, healed miraculously.

What would it mean if it were supposed that faith in the living God were most surely based upon miracles? What importance have a few miracles amid the countless multitude of occurrences that are not miracles? We do not need a God Who upon a few occasions has asserted His power but for the rest of time allows things to take their own course. We need One Who works always and in all things, and in the most ordinary occurrences draws near to the believing soul. Therefore I would tolerate the miraculous anywhere rather than in the sphere of religion.

7.

I know that the spirit of Christianity has nothing to fear from the light of clear thought.

I have found in it pure piety, truth which satisfies the heart, fervency of spiritual life. Why should warmth be incompatible with light? Why cannot the truth of the heart exist side by side with the truth of the understanding? Wherefore must I either renounce thought in order to be pious, or renounce piety in order to think?

But, alas, I live in a time in which light and heat threaten to part company with one another. The temples of piety are dim and the clear abodes of thought are cold. In the ancient societies of the different creeds there burns much deep love for God and mankind, many souls find peace and are preserved from being overwhelmed in the stormy waves of this troublesome world. But together with their sacred treasure they guard most anxiously the forms in which former generations have enshrined the soul of Christianity, and they cannot realise that the spirit alone is divine while the form of expression is human. They condemn those who feel bound to test and to

investigate. They cast upon them the reproach that in their pride they wish to know better than their sainted forefathers, or even than God Himself. They do not perceive that the advance in scientific knowledge, which God has brought about in the history of the world, demands that such examination should be made; they do not realise that those who feel roused to this enquiry may not refuse to obey what is in truth God's call.

I cannot call their intolerance sinful. It is impossible for them to be tolerant when in their opinion God's honour is attacked and the salvation of mankind is endangered. But the very fact that they imagine the fulfilment of a plain duty to be rebellion against God, that they condemn without discrimination those who differ from themselves, is a proof in itself that they are involved in fatal error, and cannot distinguish the spirit of Christ from the ideas concerning Him and His work which have arisen in the course of history. Though they may be quite clear in their thoughts concern-

ing other questions, though in their behaviour they may be just and kind, in this point they are compelled to reject the clear light of truth, and even to be hard and unjust towards good and pious men. And so they affix a blemish upon piety which makes it hateful to many, and they help to bring it about that noble souls are doubtful concerning religion, and ignoble souls misuse it for the satisfaction of their passions.

At the opposite pole to this error lies another which we may describe as light without heat. Here we find much earnest endeavour after truth, much self-sacrifice in the service of science, and great results which have been attained thereby. But there is no feeling for, no comprehension of religion. Men take exception to the forms in which religion appears; they discover in them manifold discrepancies with scientific truth. They will not realise that the form is not the essence, and that at the root even of the most imperfect religious conceptions there lies a pressing need which

must be satisfied if the man would develop healthily and completely. They even feel that here there is a void place in their souls, and they are moved by a profound discontent if the defect becomes noticeable. They seek to supply it by devotion to art and its ideal glorification of life. But so long as the higher world is only an imagination of the mind, and is not believed in as the most certain of realities, so long as the soul timidly and with hesitation keeps at a distance from the one and true Source of life in which alone it can find rest, so long no art is sufficient to produce real fervour of life. The cultured man has a slight compensation which he may falsely imagine satisfies the need of his soul, but the uncultured man goes quite empty away.

I do not condemn those who are ill-disposed towards religion because from their standpoint they regard it as opposed to truth. It is however just this want of appreciation of an essential condition of man's spiritual life which shows that their standpoint is not the right

one. However honest their intention may be, however much they may have at heart the progress of mankind, they hinder the same in one of its most important aspects, and they stunt the healthy development of human nature.

And so light and heat, which are one by nature, are separated from one another. And few in number are those who recognise and endeavour to combine what is true in the two opposing parties. They are looked at askance by both sides. They go each on his own lonely way. They search and yet can point to no commodious highroad along which one may march encouraged by the company of many brethren. Therefore they are despised, and must submit to hear bitter words to which they can give no reply.

8.

Will some means be discovered to bring about a union between thought and religious feeling, some harmonising influence that

answers to the needs of the present day and has power to awaken all noble souls, whether among the educated or uneducated, to an energy that is both clear-sighted and fervent? I cannot tell; I find it useless even to make conjectures on the point. It may well be that at the right time a prophet will appear, who by his word of freedom will bring order into the strife of thought. So it has happened many times already in the history of the world. It may also be that from this spiritual warfare a new spiritual influence may proceed and bring to light the truth for which we crave. But this lies in the future. We are now in the midst of the strife of opposing views, and we must consider carefully how we must conduct ourselves therein and what we in our modest sphere must do in order that our people may abide unharmed throughout this critical period and may prepare the way for better times.

1. We must seek to promote in every way the conviction that goodness in itself has worth, but that religion without goodness is a lie.

Our people must accustom themselves to judge of every man without exception by his actions, not by his creed; they must learn to feel it a sin against the truth when a man, though he be good and filled with pure self-sacrificing love, is condemned because of his religious views. For the excellence of religious feeling is conditioned by the moral purity, sincerity, and power of the religious man; and nothing can be more important than that the religious spirit should be cleansed from the manifold impurities which have developed so powerfully under the ages of ecclesiastical party spirit.

2. Similarly we must try to make it more and more clear to men that piety is absolutely necessary to the completeness of man's nature. The good man who is without faith belongs indeed unconsciously to the kingdom of God, but we ought to belong to it in full consciousness. That widespread religious indifference, that unnatural shrinking from every living inward fellowship with God, that cold reserve

and uncertainty in the deepest relations of the soul, must be overcome, and it should no longer be allowed that childlike faith and earnest piety should be subjects of mockery and the defenceless prey of hatred and contempt. There is no discrepancy here with our first requirement, rather it is most closely bound up with it. For the man of superficial mind, he who is wanting in true moral earnestness, is satisfied with a threadbare virtue, and feels no deeper need than the desire to be accounted righteous before men. Earnest aspiration after moral perfection, and sincerity which recognises present imperfection—these drive us into the arms of God with Whom we find the peace of forgiveness together with the strongest incentives to fresh moral endeavour. Therefore let morality be recognised and valued at its full worth. The logical result will be an enlarged understanding and appreciation of faith.

3. If our purpose be the promotion of true morality and religion in right relation to one another, we cannot but work constantly for the

general recognition of Christianity in its simplicity, which indeed constitutes its peculiar truth, beauty, and power. We cannot by a mere word conjure away the historical accretions, the manifold forms and symbols of worship and doctrine, which have gathered round Christianity in the course of the ages and have reduced it to the level of a religion among other religions; rather we must allow them their appropriate rights in so far as they are not contrary to the truth. But these outward accidents must not be permitted to displace the inward reality, they must not from being means become the end. This inward reality of Christianity is simply and solely the spirit of Christ, and this is nothing else than pure morality and pure piety. All forms of worship and ecclesiastical doctrines have worth only in so far as they give expression to the spirit of Christ and help to deliver the heart from the bonds of selfishness and to lead it on to the love of God and mankind. Whoso by word and deed spreads this knowledge

among the people, he helps to cut through the roots of the vices of narrow-mindedness and bigotry both among the religious and the enemies of religion; he helps to prepare the way for the union upon a higher platform of those sects which champion some particular portion of the truth.

4. With this end in view we ought not to excommunicate ourselves from the religious community to which we belong by education or the circumstances of our life. Here is the soil whence our religious life derives its sustenance, here lies the sphere of our action. Here, inspired by pure love for the truth and by hearty devotion to the good of the brethren, we must set ourselves in accordance with our insight to preserve what is good and to remove what is false and harmful. Feeling with the people and speaking in their language, we must work for the elevation of the moral and religious life by emphasising constantly and forcibly the claim of the spirit of Christ. In this way we shall best contribute to the purifi-

cation of their religious ideas and to the promotion among them of a spirit of reverent sympathy with the views of others. Only when it is absolutely impossible to reconcile our conscience with the principles and constitution of our Church or to bring about any reform in the same can it be right for us either to depart from her communion or to enter into open conflict with her tenets. Such conflict indeed can only be justified by a divine vocation, and this implies a compelling cause and sufficient spiritual endowments.

5. We may not keep silence when sacerdotalism misuses the most sacred needs of the people in order to lay its yoke upon them, or when superstition spreads its sphere of influence wider and wider and in the name of religion tramples upon the reason, endangers morality, and poisons piety. We must call these things by their right names, and may not shrink from conflict with them even though we cause pain to really pious souls by disturbing their peace of mind and shaking the security of their faith.

But we are bound to consider seriously whether we have anything to substitute for that which is attacked by us, anything that is really understood and which satisfies the needs of the pious soul. It is possible for something to appear to us of serious importance, and yet to have very slight significance for the majority of men. We can be quite clear in our minds upon some point without being able to make it clear to the people. And that which is a matter of conscience for us can become a snare for the consciences of others. There is need then of great caution. For example, we ought not to introduce among the people questions of philosophical or theological controversy except upon special occasions and under special circumstances. We must wait until we can with good conscience regard such questions as settled, so that we can then impart the result in such a way that it convinces men without perplexing them, and serves to clear their ideas and to promote their moral and religious life. But under all circumstances we

must avoid the animosity of party controversy, for this cometh ever of evil.

6. With resolute determination we must oppose pride of knowledge, whether it be that pride which in the name of a supposed revelation pretends to know things which no man can know, or decides questions which belong to the sphere of science ; or whether it be that other pride which under the cloak of science steps across the borders of science, delivers its contemptuous judgment concerning the facts of the inner life, and with light heart treads underfoot the precious inheritance of the centuries. Here only the strictest integrity and thoroughness in dealing with both religious feeling and with science can be of any avail. We must set the goal as high as possible ; thus we learn humility, which, above all things, is needful for us and our times. We must oppose every fashion which is calculated to foster spiritual pride or the self-conceit of half culture. But every mode of thought which judges of a man's worth by

his knowledge, even though this be very deep and extensive, is really half culture. We must give absolute emphasis to the fact that real culture should comprehend the whole nature of a man, and above all should reveal itself in the moral and religious sphere. Nothing is more fatal than that mere culture of the understanding which so easily deadens a man's conscience and causes him to look down upon simplicity so disdainfully. Only when our educated classes are better and more religious than the uneducated, only then can they take the foremost place and keep it to the benefit of the people. Then also they will be proud no longer, but in the love of Christ they will condescend to the lowly.

7. Our hearts must be in sympathy with the people. In self-surrendering love we must seek to understand them; we must enter into their ideas and feelings and appreciate their needs, not in the cold enquiring spirit of a scientific investigator, but with a hearty desire to feel and to live with them and serve

them. And indeed we cannot dedicate our attention and our powers of service to a more worthy object. It is only when we can speak in the language of the people that we can enlighten them without injuring their most sacred feelings or correct their ideas without perplexing them. But we should by no means imagine that in doing this we are making a great sacrifice, and are giving without receiving anything in return. The so-called cultured classes cannot do without the common people, the soundness of their own thought and feeling depends upon constant and living converse with them. So soon as the cultured classes cut themselves loose from fellowship with the common people their own social life becomes sickly, puffed up with pride and yet inwardly hollow; they either lose the sense of religion altogether, or else the religion they have is mere canting hypocrisy.

8. We must give effect to the fundamental Christian conceptions of sin and grace, reconciliation and conversion, in their full signifi-

cance, without sharing in those degenerate and exaggerated views of these truths by which they have been oftentimes rendered offensive to the healthy mind. We should not make men to be worse than they are, nor speak of sin in such a fashion that our teaching becomes mere insincere chattering. We should not seek to stir up feelings that are unnatural; neither should we judge of the condition of the heart by external signs, nor make conversion depend upon the confession of some artificial creed or some prescribed succession of affected feelings. But it behoves us to be as careful to avoid promoting that want of principle which causes men to regard everything as right and good, and gives God a place far from men where He has no concern with their motives and actions. Evil must be condemned as evil with sternness and severity. Evil must with full religious earnestness be felt as sin, as a man's rebellion against his supreme Lord and only Saviour, a rebellion by which he separates himself from God and

loses his true life just as the leaf withers which is torn from the tree. There is no hope of rescue unless the son returns in penitence and supplication to his merciful Father. The haughty spirit must be broken, the hard heart must be softened, we must become as little children. With childlike spirit we must fully and completely surrender ourselves to God; we must acknowledge our nothingness, desiring to receive all from Him only, and consecrating to Him all that we have received; without self-glorification and with all our hopes set upon Him we must live by His grace; with unconstrained affection we must serve Him and obey His law as the sole and eternal good. This is reconciliation. And he that is thus reconciled is converted. We must awake from sleep, from our gloomy brooding and spiritual confusion, from a state in which God is forgotten and lost, to clear, bright, and peaceful life in Him; we must shake off the bonds of slavery and rise to freedom. This is the crying need of our generation, and the

need is supplied where the spirit of Christ comes to perfect development.

9. We must be thoroughly sincere and be ready to dispense with influence and the joy of fellowship rather than incur the guilt of intellectual insincerity. We ought indeed to speak in the language of the people, but only in so far as we find true thoughts and feelings expressed therein. We may never say or teach what we do not feel and believe. We must always endeavour, though with consideration and care, to increase among men the knowledge that we can never speak of God and of divine things other than imperfectly. We may never give the impression that our method of expression of the truth is the only one and is valid for all time. We must keep stern watch over ourselves, lest our feelings become unreal, and lest we impart to others teaching which is not our settled conviction but an opinion which we have forced ourselves to accept. For if we do this we seduce others to like falsehood. We also

seduce men to falsehood when we require from them all the same feelings and like methods of expression. More especially do we sin grievously against the young when we encourage in them feelings which are only natural at a more advanced age. Above all we fall into dangerous errors if we lay all stress upon the feelings and accordingly regard a one-sided fostering of religious feeling as the supreme duty of life. The kingdom of God is not only a fostering of piety, but the development of all the powers of man in accordance with the will of the Creator. No single form of activity which is necessary for the individual and for mankind ought to be suppressed for the sake of another, at least if soundness of constitution is to be preserved. Religion may not encroach in any point upon that which is truly natural; she may not be wanting in sympathy for anything which is truly human; she ought rather to be that which in all the world is most in accord with nature; she ought to teach men to recognise

nature in all its fulness as the expression of the Divine Will. Therefore it is that in religion above all things all unnaturalness and untruth have the direst consequences, and that in the course of history every real advance and every revival of the religious life have been efforts after simplicity, returns from artificiality to the truth of nature. This points out to us the need of our times and the duty it involves upon us.

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